University of Alberta

Leadership in Independent Schools in Alberta

by

Bruce Vernon Decoux ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **"Leadership in Independent Schools in Alberta"** submitted by Bruce Vernon Decoux in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of current Alberta independent school principals relative to the major factors that were perceived to affect success in their leadership role. The examination of such perceptions provided insights into the leadership of independent schools.

Principals from eight accredited, funded, independent schools in Alberta participated in the study. Information was obtained from audiotaped interviews, an ongoing journal, policy documents, relevant school literature, and observation.

Each of these principals practiced in unique leadership contexts that were different from those of public/separate school principals and from one another. The data identified several important similarities and differences among all schools in the sample.

The respondents perceived various influential factors from the perspective of their own unique context. Although all schools exhibited different constituents, cultures, and missions, they all evidenced a philosophical congruence enhanced by respect and trust. This factor provided the overarching setting for the principal's leadership behavior. The principals reported that this factor resulted in expending much of their effort in the structural, human resource, and symbolic dimensions of leadership rather than in the political dimension.

The respondents had developed positive relationships with Alberta Education and the consultants based in local regional offices. The principals expressed concern over planned closure of these offices and a reduction of consulting services, which they perceived would result in the loss of current information and strong collegial relationships.

Within the dimensions of human resources and symbolism, the principals paid close attention to participation and involvement, recruiting and training staff, empowerment, staff professional development, and the quality of life in their schools. Most were acutely aware of the importance of institutional identity, culture, and the power of symbolic activities. These principals consistently employed symbolism in their practice, which is not consistent with research findings about principals in public schools.

The high degree of philosophical congruence in these schools enhanced a climate of trust and respect, positively influencing the school's culture. This philosophical congruence and its consequences substantially influenced the success of the leadership behavior of the independent school principals in this study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Historically, some parents of considerable vision and wealth in Europe, Asia, Australia, and North America have enrolled their children in private schools which would provide them with the advantages of advanced knowledge, social contacts, and prestige to make their way in life. Most of those who could not afford such schools depended on local public schools for their children's education. In recent years a wealthy middle class, the technological revolution, and a realization that an enhanced education might better enable their children to be successful led to a perceived need for an education more attuned to the requirements of "the global village" than that provided in public school systems.

Related to this matter, Bergen (1994) stated that

> public opinion polls show that a notable proportion of the public is not entirely satisfied with its schools--that it is highly unlikely that a public school system could meet the expectations of all clients--at best, public schools can satisfy only the majority of clients in their communities. Parents who are not satisfied with available public schooling may best be served by a private sector school that caters to a more homogeneous clientele. (p. 3)

The 24th annual Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa education poll indicated that "the public wants change and improvement in public schools" (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1992, p. 42). Also, Fennell (1993) wrote that "the question of exactly what Canadians want from their schools is at the core of a deep philosophical clash" (p. 29).

In Alberta a major philosophical and financial shift in the delivery of public education, combined with a government emphasis on entrepreneurism, has created considerable controversy within the province. In 1988 the Alberta Legislative Assembly established the statutory basis for

a religious school to be recognized as an "alternative program" under the School Act (1988), Chapter S-3, Part 2, Division 1, Section 16, which stated: "In this section alternative program means an education program that (a) emphasizes a particular language, culture, or religion or subject matter, or (b) uses a particular teaching philosophy." Currently in Alberta, numerous alternate programs offer unique educational experiences for students. In 1996 the Edmonton Public School Board approved for the first time in Alberta the establishment of a religious alternate program (Logos Christian), utilizing this legislation. At the present time five of these programs are operating within Edmonton schools.

On May 25, 1994, legislation was proclaimed making Alberta the first Canadian province to approve the establishment of charter schools. It was stipulated that these schools may not be affiliated with a religious faith or denomination. It was intended that such schools go beyond alternative school programs and provide a particular educational service to fulfill a specific need (Alberta Education, 1995). Such schools have the option of emphasizing the arts, sports, academics, or other needs perceived by interested members of a community. Charter boards, comprised of parents and teachers of school students, have the authority and autonomy to operate the school within its own policies under section 24.1(1) of the School Act (1988) and are accountable for the school. The charter board is also accountable to either the Minister of Education or the local school board, depending upon which agency established the school and whose duty it is to ensure that the Alberta school follows the tenets of the charter. Charter schools are part of the public system and cannot deny access to any student as long as sufficient space and resources are available. Alternate programs and charter schools represent an effort on the part of the

government to expand the range of educational services available to students. The results of such policy will not be measurable for several years.

However, a movement towards the independent school sector by those parents unprepared to wait for the results of the policy's impact may be reasonably predicted. Additionally, Nowers and Bell (1993, p. 9) noted that there are more single parents, working couples, and middle-income families who are willing to sacrifice a great deal to buy their children a better education than they perceive is coming from the public sector. They are not prepared to wait for charter schools and alternate programs to develop as their children mature.

Independent schools in Alberta currently attract approximately 1,000 additional students per year (see Table 1). Currently, more than 19,200 students are enrolled in approved independent schools in the province (see Appendix A). Establishing an independent school is facilitated by Alberta Education through the publication of a *Private Schools Handbook* (Alberta Education, 1996), which identifies the requirements specified in legislation; provincial policies and regulations relevant for independent schools; information for planning, organizing, and operating an independent school; and information and requirements regarding steps to be taken when an independent school closes. The handbook also provides the location and names of regional office directors and private school coordinators throughout the province who are able to assist current and potential operators. Each year a number of schools begin operation and others cease. Recently, a number of independent schools have begun operation in Alberta using innovative approaches such as delivering their program by computer,

Table 1

Total Elementary-Secondary Enrolment, by Type of Approved School, Canada and Four Provinces, 1989-90 to 1993-94

Type of school and year	Canada	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskat-chewan	Manitoba
Public:					
1989-90	4,788,914	512,609	471,086	200,335	197,724
1990-91	4,845,308	519,958	483,857	198,933	197,586
1991-92	4,915,630	539,300	495,360	198,433	196,894
1992-93	4,967,849	554,590	505,419	198,142	196,619
1993-94	5,022,351	568,668	512,255	198,331	195,761
Private:					
1989-90	233,753	38,438	15,084	3,048	10,161
1990-91	240,968	40,677	16,173	3,199	10,551
1991-92	245,255	44,556	16,617	3,197	10,683
1992-93	257,605	45,612	18,049	3,420	11,432
1993-94	265,321	49,334	19,209	3,200	11,826
Total:					
1989-90	5,075,277	555,546	492,910	212,676	219,245
1990-91	5,141,003	564,627	507,460	212,278	219,859
1991-92	5,218,237	587,920	519,936	212,071	220,515
1992-93	5,284,146	604,741	531,783	212,386	221,578
1993-94	5,347,389	622,697	540,501	212,677	221,610

Source: Statistics Canada (1995).

emphasizing certain sports, and serving the needs of students from other countries (AISCA, 1996).

Definitions

The literature on independent schools is replete with various titles for the position most commonly referred to in North American public schools as the *principal.* In this dissertation, the term *principal* is used rather than terms such as *director, head, headmaster, first principal,* and *superintendent,* and refers to the individual appointed by a board of directors to fulfill the required leadership and managerial role of the institution and to report to the board.

The term *independent schools* refers to schools of choice that develop their own mission statement and educational program and include staff who are like-minded and cohesive and have little affiliation with the public or separate school systems in Alberta. Groups associated with these schools show substantial agreement on educational goals (Madsen, 1995). Those Alberta schools in the study met the requirements of the School Act (1988, 22[4]).

The words *independent* and *private* have the same meaning when referring to schools that are not part of the public or separate school systems in Alberta. The School Act (1988) refers to such schools as "private"; however, the operators generally prefer the name "independent." According to the School Act (22[4]), all private schools must be registered. A school is entitled to be registered if it meets these minimal conditions: (a) A program of studies must meet provincial goals and standards; (b) the school must meet provincial standards of student achievement and achievement testing; (c) the operator must agree to regular evaluation and

monitoring; and (d) the school must meet all local and provincial health, safety, and building standards. Registered independent schools are not entitled to provincial funding.

According to the School Act (1988), "a private school is entitled to be accredited as an accredited private school" (22[4]) if it meets the following conditions in addition to the conditions for registration:

1. The program of studies must be approved by the Minister. (This usually means that the school will follow either the Alberta curriculum or a modification of it. The Minister will usually approve a program that can be demonstrated at least to parallel the content of the provincial curriculum.)

2. The student body must consist of at least seven students from two or more families.

3. Teachers must have qualifications which "are approved by the Minister" (School Act, 1988, Sec. 22[4]). (Currently, approval is usually limited to Alberta Certification, although the intent of the legislation is clearly that there be some latitude for alternative qualifications.) Accredited independent schools may be eligible for limited provincial funding if they meet all the requirements for funding.

Need for the Study

The leadership role of the independent school principal in Canada has received little attention from researchers. The current socioeconomic conditions in Canada and particularly in Alberta may portend an increased level of attendance for and interest in independent schools and those who lead them. The experience of these individuals in their unique educational milieu may also provide insights for leadership in public schools, alternative programs, and charter schools. In Alberta the government has effectively

defined new duties in the role of principal: "Superintendents will continue to provide educational leadership, but school principals and their teaching staff will begin making some of the decisions about program delivery that superintendents have made in the past" (Alberta Education, 1994, p. 26). In many independent schools, principals have traditionally fulfilled the role of both superintendent and principal; however, in the U.S. their longevity in the position is markedly shorter than that of those in the public school systems (Shank 1979).

Shapiro (1985), in the report of the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario, indicated that, generally, "research in the area of private schooling has not, in fact, been extensive" (p. 37). A review of the literature produced little evidence of research relative to Canadian independent school principals, particularly in the Alberta context. Bergen (1986) noted that "a limited number of studies on private schools, generally restricted to the individual provinces, are available" (p. 93). Conversations on May 23 and 24, 1995, with Dr. Lee Hollar, Coordinator of Education, Society of Christian Schools, British Columbia; Mr. Tom Ellwood, Inspector, Independent Schools Branch, Ministry of Education, British Columbia; Mr. Gerry Ensing, Director, Independent Schools Branch, Ministry of Education, B.C.; Mr. Gary Duthler, Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta (AISCA); and Dr. John Bergen, Professor Emeritus, Department of Educational Administration, University of Alberta, indicated a dearth of research involving leadership in independent schools in Western Canada. Visits to a number of Alberta independent schools indicated an interest on the part of principals in research in their area and a willingness to participate. Several noted that they felt generally ignored by researchers and the public school sector.

In Alberta, current legislation and policy is requiring a shift from provincial direction of public education to a locally based management and implementation model. This shift is intended to foster schools that serve the needs of the local community via parent councils and principals who will have greater on-site decision-making authority than previously. School boards and superintendents retain a general policy-development and reporting function. However, more management functions, decision making, and leadership issues will fall to the principal, who will serve and report more directly to the local constituents than before (Alberta Education, 1994).

Such a situation is not entirely unlike that of the independent school principal who, on a regular basis, must perform the roles of both superintendent and principal within the context of a particular educational and/or religious community. Independent school principals, whether in secular or denominational schools, have traditionally fulfilled this dual role, attempting to lead effectively in situation-specific cultures with unique constraints imposed by demands related to specific parameters of effectiveness required within their particular secular or denominational contexts. Provincial and school board standards of leader effectiveness, constraints, the operational culture, and symbolism are factors which affect these individuals and their success as leaders. The mission and goals of independent schools have different and occasionally additional focuses than do those of public school systems. These provide a unique context within which leadership, constraints, culture, and symbolism interact to challenge the principal. Given the current trend in Alberta legislation, public school principals may necessarily have to face similar challenges in the future.

The complexity of the role duality of independent school principals encompassing simultaneously the duties of superintendents and those of principals in school systems may be better understood through leadership studies of superintendents (e.g., Allison, 1989; Boich, Farquhar, & Leithwood, 1989; Genge, 1991; Immegart, 1988; March & Miklos, 1983; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986); constraints which have an impact upon leadership (Eastcott, Holdaway, & Kuiken, 1974; Murphy, 1987; Renihan & Renihan, 1984); school principals and school culture (e.g., Bolman & Deal, 1992; Chubb, 1985; Deal & Peterson, 1990; Johnson, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1991; Zaleznik, 1977); and symbolism (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Chubb, 1988; Clark, 1975; Deal, 1991; Hanaway & Abromowitz, 1985; Johnson, 1990; Reitzug & Reeves, 1990) in both public and independent schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of current independent school principals in Alberta relative to the major factors which were perceived to affect success in their leadership role. The examination of such perceptions was expected to provide new insights about the leadership of independent schools.

General Research Question

What factors are perceived to influence the effectiveness of principals in independent schools? In order to develop information relevant to this and other related questions, the perceptions of principals from Alberta independent secular and denominational schools were sought. Appropriate

literature was reviewed, board meetings were attended when possible, and school policy and relevant documents were reviewed.

Specific Research Questions

The following specific questions were addressed. They were grouped into three areas relative to factors which were perceived to influence principals' effectiveness in independent schools.

External Factors

1. What influences are exerted on the principal's role in an independent school by the legislation, Alberta Education, and other significant organizations and individuals?

Internal Factors

2. In what ways do societies and boards influence the role of the principal in an independent school?
3. In what ways does the chair of the school board influence the role of the principal in an independent school?
4. In what ways does the financial officer influence the role of the principal in an independent school?
5. In what ways does the superintendent influence the role of the principal in an independent school?
6. In what ways do the faculty influence the role of the principal in an independent school?
7. In what ways do the parents influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

8. In what ways does the student body influence the role of the principal in an independent school?
9. In what ways does the size of the school influence the role of the principal in an independent school?
10. In what ways does the school's program influence the role of the principal in an independent school?
11. In what ways does the school culture influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

Criteria for Success

12. What are the personal and professional characteristics perceived to be necessary for success in the principal's role in an independent school?
13. What criteria are used by principals of independent schools to assess their effectiveness, and how do these principals relate their effectiveness as principal to the effectiveness of their schools?

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into eight chapters. This chapter has identified some historical and political factors that have influenced the environment within which independent schools in Alberta operate. Relevant definitions, a rationale and purpose for the study, and general and specific research questions were also identified.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature relative to the leadership context within which independent school principals practice. The chapter then focuses particularly on recent literature relative to leadership, effectiveness, constraints, school culture, and symbolism. Chapter 3

delineates the methodological approach used to study the factors that are perceived to influence the effectiveness of principals in independent schools. Chapter 4 examines the characteristics of the respondent principals and the operational context of their practice. Chapters 5 through 7 present the findings of the research relative to external, internal, professional, and personal factors that are perceived to influence the effectiveness of the principals in the study. The final chapter presents an overview of the study, a summary and discussion of the findings, general themes, and implications and recommendations for further practice and research.

A reference list and appendices, which include relevant correspondence and the interview schedule, conclude the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In addition to reviewing selected literature on independent schools, this chapter focuses upon the literature relevant to leadership, and especially its relationship to effectiveness, constraints, school culture, and symbolism. In this review the more recent literature on leadership, effectiveness, constraints, school culture, and symbolism is emphasized rather than a detailed historical analysis of leadership. Bolman and Deal (1994) and Genge (1991) noted a recent association of effective educational leaders with transformational, cultural, and symbolic leadership. Currently, these aspects of leadership have drawn considerable interest from researchers; therefore, the more recent literature relevant to these areas is also emphasized.

Independent Schools

The contexts within which principals lead in independent schools are considerably different from those of their public school counterparts and warrant explication. Independent schools constitute a small proportion of all schools. Kane (1991) noted that they generally share six basic characteristics: self-governance, self-support, self-defined curriculum, self-selected students, self-selected faculty, and small size. A selective synthesis of those factors within these six characteristics, relative to their potential for creating administrative issues, is crucial to understanding the leadership context of the independent school.

Self-Governance

The board of trustees of an independent school has complete responsibility for the institution. The board is responsible for the philosophy, resources, and programs. The principal whom it hires is directly responsible to the board, faculty, students, and parents. Thus the principal is also responsible for fulfilling duties normally assigned to the superintendent in a public school system, which often results in direct contact with external organizations, as well as the board, faculty, students, and parents. This direct contact results in an expectation of immediate responsiveness from the principal by all constituents.

Grant (1981; cited in Kane, 1991), in his essay *The Character of Education and the Education of Character,* used a metaphor comparing the administrative context of public and private schools, likening the former to a watermelon and the latter to an avocado:

> The thick rind represents the accretion of bureaucracy, court orders, union contracts, and measures of accountability that constrain the rightful use of power; the dispersion of such power is like the dispersion of the watermelon's seeds: there is no clearly definable center. He compares the private school to an avocado, where adult power and initiative are akin to the large seed at the center, and there is only a thin skin of externally imposed policy. (p. 398)

Self-Support

Independent schools are often cautious about accepting government subsidies because they pose a threat to self-governance. Thus they are dependent on tuitions, gifts, endowments, and high tuition fees, which "limit their ability to determine the composition of the student body" (Kane, 1991, p. 398). They tend to attract children of economically advantaged parents. Public school districts are organized in geographic areas, and they often

have schools that are less racially and economically diverse than are many private schools. Independent schools recruit from a wide geographic area; therefore the nature of the student body is often more diverse than are those of the public schools which surround them. The self-supporting characteristic of independent schools creates a situation wherein the schools must not only satisfy their diverse clientele, but they must also produce results because the parents pay tuition and expect value for their investment. Further, independent schools are expected, and in most cases are bound by the school's contract with the parents, to provide individual attention to each student (Kraushaar, 1972).

Self-Designed Curriculum

Most independent schools offer a curriculum that is highly academic and rigorous. The emphasis on college preparation "allows for cohesiveness in the curriculum, but it usually confines electives to academic offerings and eliminates options for students to take technical and vocational courses, which are regular fare at public schools" (Kane, 1986, p. 123). Such an orientation, combined with the small size of such schools, limits the range of courses for students. Each school designs its own curriculum or adapts an external curriculum, and the continuous assessment of curriculum by the faculty provides a form of staff development not possible if the curriculum is completely predetermined by an external agency. Thus the character of the faculty and their needs differ from those of the public school. Faculty of independent schools must be flexible and well grounded in several curricular areas. Additionally, they may require religious professional development.

Self-Selected Students

Independent schools are at liberty to select the types of students whom they feel are most suitable relative to the program offered. Conversely, the parents and student(s) choose the school. School, parents, and student are all aware that the relationship is voluntary. Deal (1991) contended that private schools, "to attract clientele, . . . must create a unique identity, a set of values and traditions that sets them apart from competitors. They use their identity as a screening device for potential applications," and that many private schools are "beloved institutions, special places that capture the hearts and imaginations of their members" (p. 419). Although the school may dismiss a student for academic or disciplinary reasons, the student may also choose to leave the school. Kraushaar (1972) noted that "both the patrons and the school have a stake in seeing that the contract is fulfilled satisfactorily" (p. 93). Generally, schools with a long history and an excellent reputation have waiting lists, and the selection advantage rests with the school. Newer and less well-known schools may of necessity have to exert more effort in attracting and retaining students (Deal, 1991).

Self-Selected Faculty

Independent schools are not always bound by external teacher-certification requirements. However, teachers with undergraduate and graduate degrees in the liberal arts and science or demonstrated academic achievement are sought after. Some teachers have no formal education courses and must learn the skills of pedagogy on the job (Kane, 1991). The lack of affiliation with public school teachers through certification and unionization allows independent schools to contain salaries and maintain the freedom to dismiss teachers without the prolonged procedures necessary in

public schools (Kane, 1991). However, Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985) pointed out that the academic orientation, working conditions, and curricula attract teachers to independent schools regardless of the lower pay.

Smaller Enrollments

The average enrollment and pupil-teacher ratio in public schools is usually greater than that for independent schools. Smaller class sizes and individualized assistance and attention have important ramifications for the average student or "socially invisible nonpersons" (Baird, 1987, p. 3) in independent schools. Powell et al. (1985, pp. 207-232) stated that these schools provide the elements of "personalization" and "push" for those "unspecial" students in the middle who would receive little attention in public schools due to their accommodation of students at the extreme ends of the spectrum.

Another view of the context of independent schools was provided by Esty in his 1988-89 President's Report (p. 489) wherein he identified seven areas in which independent schools are unique and perform with high quality:

- attention to individual learning styles and rates
- teaching all the time
- athletics for everyone
- nurturing a sense of community service
- partnership and shared values with graduates and parents
- the potential to be truly multicultural communities
- teaching, learning, and living in an ethical context.

The unique context within which independent school principals lead requires attention to certain facets of leadership and effectiveness,

constraints, school culture, and symbolism that may not be evidenced in other school systems.

Leadership and Effectiveness

Burns (1978) noted that "leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 2). Researchers have concluded that alone neither the trait approach (Johns, 1988) nor the situational approach (Hoy & Miskel, 1982) would suffice to conceptualize leadership satisfactorily. Hoy and Miskel noted that the previous and current research "indicate[s] that both personality and situational factors are important to leadership effectiveness" (p. 223). Researchers have been concerned with categorizing the behavior of leaders for several decades (Barnard, 1938; Bolman & Deal, 1994; Bossert, 1982; Etzioni, 1961; Good & Brophy, 1986) and have employed various terms to describe the categories, such as *effectiveness and efficiency* or *instrumental and expressive needs,* among others. However, in retrospect, most of the literature indicated agreement that two general facets of leader behavior exist: involvement and concern with individuals and involvement and concern with completing the task.

More recently, researchers have moved from differentiating routine management functions such as planning, organizing, and supervising (Boich et al., 1989) towards clarifying the difference between the leader's management functions and leadership roles. Boich et al. confirmed that most leaders are trained to be managers and cited the requirement of higher order requirements for leaders. Research on such higher order prerequisites resulted in the conceptualization of the transformational leader (Bennis, 1984; Burns, 1978; Konnert & Augenstein, 1990; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). Tichy and Urlich (1984) identified transformational leaders as having "an

ability to help the organization develop a vision of what it can be, to mobilize the organization, to accept and work toward achieving the new vision, and to institutionalize the changes that must last over time" (p. 59). Burns (1978) stated that this leader also looks for "potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher order needs, and engages the whole person of the follower" (p. 4). Concurrent with the study of such higher order leadership qualities and practices, researchers examined culture and cultural leaders who "focus on developing a strong organizational culture in which people believe strongly, with which they identify personally, and to which they gladly render their loyalty" (Owens, 1988, p. 58).

Schein (1987) identified the culture within which leaders operate as

> a pattern of basic assumptions . . . invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration--that has worked well enough . . . to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 9)

Effective leadership in education has received considerable attention in the research literature, particularly in the past two decades. Bossert et al. (1982) summarized much of the research on characteristics of effective principals into four major dimensions of effectiveness: emphasis on the development and attainment of goals; coordination of programs, discipline, evaluation, staff development; utilization of interpersonal skills to encourage and develop teachers; and influencing instructional decision making. Other researchers have examined each of these dimensions. However, note should be taken of Johnson's (1988) cautionary observations:

> First, as Good and Brophy (1986) have indicated, there remains a paucity of literature about behaviors which might compromise effective leadership; this matter has not been sufficiently well researched to permit assertions to be made with confidence. Second, there is a particular danger of concluding from the [developed] array of common attributes that a uniform style of

school leadership is best for all situations. A recent *UCEA Review* (1986, p. 3) statement cautioned against such an assumption:

> Teachers are motivated by different administrative styles. Some teachers want specific direction; others work best with more flexibility. There is no best style for all circumstances. The effective schools literature should not be interpreted to mean a particular management style is best. (p. 59)

Johnson further stated that "such a view has gained recent support among some educational writers (e.g., W. Greenfield, 1986; Pitner, 1987) and is consistent with contingency views of leadership" (p. 60).

Research results by Greenfield (1995), Ogawa and Bossert (1995), and Bolman and Deal (1992) have particular relevance to this study in that they address the contextual aspects of effective leadership and the manner in which leaders influence and are influenced by the context of their leadership environment.

Greenfield (1995) argued that schools are different from other types of organizations in that they are "uniquely moral enterprises" (p. 61) and that school leadership apart from routine (managerial) administration is a highly moral and normative endeavor critical to effective school administration. He described school leadership as involving

> a complex set of influence processes and activities undertaken to improve a school's effectiveness through voluntary changes in the preferences of others that are initiated, stimulated, guided, cultivated, sustained, and supported by formal and informal leaders, and especially by the school administrator (Etzioni, 1964, 1965, 1975; Greenfield, 1991a, 1991b; Lipham, 1964, 1973). As an interpersonal influence phenomenon between leader and others that seeks a voluntary change in the other's beliefs, behaviors, and/or attitudes, leadership processes at the school level may flow upward, from teachers to administrators, downward, from administrators to teachers, and laterally, among colleagues and between school professionals, parents, and other agents internal and external to the school. (p. 62)

Greenfield (1995, p. 67) maintained that the school administrators' demand environment consists of five interrelated role demands: moral,

social/interpersonal, instructional, managerial, and political. He posited that it is these demands and their "constancy and pervasiveness" (p. 67) that separate school administration from all others. He noted three conditions that shape the demand environment of school administration: (a) the moral character of the school; (b) the presence of a highly educated, autonomous, and practically permanent teacher workforce; and (c) a milieu characterized by continuous and unpredictable threats to its stability (p. 62). First, he explained that the moral characteristics of schools are confirmed by children's involuntary membership and subjection to a socialization not of their choosing, a culture that confirms the moral obligation of teachers to contribute positively to their students' development, and the administrator's duty to support the teachers in their endeavors. Second, he noted the peculiar characteristics of the permanent teaching workforce: relative isolation from their colleagues, a high degree of autonomy, a low level of interdependence, little close supervision, and a reliance on psychic awards. Further, he noted that "when teachers adapt new practices in their classrooms, it is usually because they are committed to these practices at a moral level--that is, they believe it is the right thing to do" and that "the challenge for school administrators is to reach teachers on this level, . . . to rely more extensively on leadership than upon management or routine administration" (p. 65). Third, he proposed that schools are more vulnerable to ongoing destabilizing factors than are other administrative contexts; for example, school board elections, hunger, violence, special-interest groups, parents, and legislative and funding decisions. Additionally, the character of students themselves relative to their personal adaptations to the environment within and without the school as well as the character of the

teacher-student relationship, which is often a superordinate and subordinate interaction, is often unpredictable on a regular basis (p. 66).

Although Greenfield (1995) and others have directed their effort towards the public school system, his research has implications for administration in independent schools; for example, when viewed from the leadership perspective of an independent school principal, the three conditions that shape the demand environment that he cited are no less valid but require a different perceptual focus and emphasis relative to leadership requirements. The constituents of independent schools present a less diverse group than do those in public schools. For example, independent schools most often enroll students who have chosen the school (or minimally believe that they have). Tenure in independent schools is rare. Teachers in these schools often bring with them a strong moral code, in some cases enhanced by particular religious beliefs. School board elections often occur on a regular, rotational basis, with minimal change on an annual basis. More often than not, parents, students, teachers, principal, and trustees are like-minded (Aitken, 1992; Deal, 1991; Grant, 1981; Kane, 1986, 1991).

Other researchers such as Ogawa and Bossert (1995) have argued that "leadership is an organizational quality" (p. 225). Because of the context in which independent school principals provide leadership--self-governance, self-support, self-designed curriculum (U.S. schools), self-selected students and faculty, and small enrollments--their argument relative to institutional theory provides another window from which to view leadership in an independent school. The writers suggested that

> leadership flows through the networks of roles that comprise organizations. The medium of leadership and the currency of leadership lie in the personal resources of people. And leadership

> shapes the systems that produce patterns of interaction and the meanings that other participants attach to organizational events. (p. 225)

They identified four basic assumptions common to most leadership research: that leadership influences organizational performance, that leadership is related to organizational roles, that leaders are individuals who possess certain attributes, and that leaders operate within organizational cultures. They suggested that institutional theory provides an alternative to the technical-rational view of organizational leadership and that examining such assumptions through the perspective of institutional theory provides a different perspective:

> Much is revealed by institutional theory when it is used to examine the four assumptions on which theories and studies of organizational leadership have been based. It sets leadership's parameters at the level of organization. It reveals the almost contradictory relationship between leadership and organizational roles. It suggests the nature of both the resources on which leadership is based and the social element on which leadership is built. Finally, it embeds leadership in a cultural context. Together, these assumptions reintroduce a perspective on leadership that has been lost by scholars. They reveal that leadership is an organizational quality. (p. 238)

Ogawa and Bossert (1995) would no doubt categorize this study as bound in the technical-rational perspective" (p. 230) in light of their assertion that "studies of leadership in school organizations usually have principals and superintendents as their subjects" (p. 228). However, given the previously noted characteristics of independent schools (Kane, 1991), institutional theory may provide a valid conceptual format with which to view some aspects of leadership in these schools, particularly when considering their emphasis on culture and tradition.

In recent years, Bolman and Deal (1984, 1991) developed a conceptual framework that is not only useful for public schools and other organizations, but also particularly helpful in studying leadership in independent schools.

At the National Center for Education Leadership (1994, pp. 77-96) in the U.S., the writers identified perceptions of effective leadership from a group of scholars and from practitioners outside the field of education. The findings indicated that (a) leadership and management are different, (b) leadership and position are not synonymous, (c) leadership is inevitably political, (d) leadership is inherently symbolic, and (e) leadership calls primarily on intangible human qualities. The conclusions of that group appeared to confirm the findings of the authors' previous and current research on leadership.

In their research on leaders' cognition, Bolman and Deal (1993) argued that an acceptable theory relative to leaders' thinking must include at least two major characteristics:

1. Its view of cognition must incorporate both the rational and the meta-rational features of complex social environments.
2. It must focus directly on the cognitive maps that leaders need to make sense out of their complex worlds. (p. 22)

The writers summarized their research on cognitive structures and processes in the following way:

> The underlying assumption is that humans classify people, objects, and experiences in terms of categories or prototypes derived from previous experiences (Pitre & Sims, 1987). These schemata allow us to "process an overwhelming amount of incomplete, inaccurate, or ambiguous information, quickly, efficiently, with relatively little effort" (Sims & Gioia, 1987, p. 12). Even when they are inaccurate, cognitive schemata permit a quick response rather than paralysis or inaction. They protect people from being overwhelmed by uncertain, nonroutine experiences. They also contain scripts for how to deal with particular categories of objects, people, roles, or events (Argyris & Schön, 1982; Pitre & Sims, 1987). (p. 22)

Bolman and Deal (1993) maintained that such cognitive structures encompass only the rational dimensions of organizations and fail to capture the meta-rational dynamics created by competing interests and unconscious drives prevalent in complex organizations, and that cognitive theory must be

enlarged to include political and symbolic forces. In order to examine the thinking of leaders the researchers included both rational and meta-rational elements and utilized "the notion of frames" to capture the idea that "people are simultaneously sensible, selfish, scheming, and symbolic" (p. 23). They maintained that as people

> enter and exit from hundreds of different situations every day, people define circumstances so that they know what to do and how to understand what others are doing. In the course of asking "What is going on here?" people frame each situation that they enter. (p. 23)

The researchers asserted that

> leaders in particular are required to make sense of ambiguous, complex, and puzzling events. When they frame accurately and respond appropriately, puzzles and problems become promising opportunities. When frames distort or overlook essential elements of a situation, leaders "lose the bubble," feel out of control, and fall back on familiar scripts even if their actions only make things worse." (p. 23)

and that

> complex organizations are full of deceptive, ambiguous, confusing, and nonroutine situations (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Such environments create dilemmas for humans who confront biological limits in memory and information processing (Simon, 1957, 1969). Frames that are too simple distort and mislead. Frames that are too complex overwhelm our capacity to think clearly, thus compounding the problem of confusion and ambiguity. (p. 24)

Bolman and Deal concluded that using a manageable number of frames, each one providing a view of different aspects of social complexity, would provide the adept user with three advantages:

1. Each frame can be coherent, parsimonious, and powerful.
2. The collection can be more comprehensive than any single frame.
3. Multiple frames enable leaders to reframe. (p. 24)

They conceptualized "four distinct frames, each representing a different facet of human organization that requires attention" (p. 24).

The Structural Frame. The structural frame emphasizes productivity and assures that organizations work best when goals and roles are clear, and the efforts of individuals and groups are well coordinated through both vertical (command, rule) and lateral (face-to-face, informal) strategies.

The Human Resource Frame. The human resource frame highlights the importance of needs and motives. It posits that organizations work best when individual needs are met and the organization provides a caring, trusting work environment. Showing concern for others and providing ample opportunities for participation and shared decision making are two of the ways that organizations enlist people's commitment and involvement at all levels.

The Political Frame. The political frame points out the limits of authority and the inevitability that resources will be too scarce to fulfill all demands. Organizations are arenas in which groups jockey for power, and goals emerge from bargaining and compromise among different interests rather than from rational analysis at the top. Conflict becomes an inescapable, even welcomed by-product of everyday life. Handled properly, it is a source of constant energy and renewal.

The Symbolic Frame. The symbolic frame centers attention on symbols, meaning, and faith. Every human organization creates symbols to cultivate commitment, hope, and loyalty. Symbols govern behavior through informal, implicit, and shared rules, agreements, and understandings. Stories, metaphors, heroes and heroines, ritual, ceremony, and play add zest and existential buoyancy. The organization becomes a way of life rather than merely a place of work. (Bolman & Deal, 1993, pp. 24-25)

Bolman and Deal's (1993) eight dimensions of leadership, based on their four frames, are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Eight Dimensions of Leadership

Structural Dimensions	Human Resource Dimensions
I. Analytic: • Thinks clearly and logically • Approaches problems through careful analysis • Approaches problems with facts and logic • Pays strict attention to detail II. Organized: • Very well organized • Develops and implements clear policies • Provides clear, consistent goals and direction • Strongly believes in clear structures and systems	I. Supportive: • Shows support and concern for others • Shows concern for others' feelings • Is consistently responsive to others • Gives recognition for work well done II. Participative: • Fosters involvement in decisions • Listens well • Is open to new ideas • Highly participative manager
Political Dimensions	**Symbolic Dimensions**
I. Powerful: • Able to mobilize people and resources • Highly persuasive and influential • Effective in getting support and cooperation • Develops alliances for a strong base of support II. Adroit: • Very skillful negotiator • Responds well to organizational conflict • Politically sensitive and skillful • Knows how to win when against opposition	I. Inspirational: • Inspires others to do their best • Communicates a strong vision • Generates loyalty • Raises enthusiasm II. Charismatic: • Leads with an emphasis on culture • Highly imaginative and creative • Generates new, exacting possibilities • Highly charismatic

Source: Bolman and Deal (1993, p. 30).

Other research by Bolman and Deal (1992) using the four frames and involving the effects of context, culture, and gender and the relationship between management and leadership for school principals in Singapore and the United States is informative and helpful for the study of independent school principals in this study. In *Leading and Managing: Effects of Context, Culture, and Gender* (Bolman & Deal, 1993), the authors were

guided by two general hypotheses: (a) The ability to reframe is important to success as a manager and a leader, and the ability to use more than one frame increases an individual's ability to be effective; and (b) leadership is contextual; that is, "different situations require different patterns of thinking" (p. 315). For example, the researchers noted that "there are some organizations . . . in which an inability to deal with political dynamics is only a modest handicap; in others it is a fatal flaw" (p. 315). Principals from the state of Florida and the Republic of Singapore participated. The authors wished to determine how contextual differences would affect issues that principals in both countries saw as important. The administrators were asked to describe in writing the accounts of "challenging leadership incidences" (p. 316) in which they had been involved. The resulting narratives were analyzed. Each case was scored for the presence or absence of each of the four frames using criteria for coding frame responses (see Table 3, p. 188). In both Florida and Singapore the human resource frame was dominant (86% in Florida and 98% in Singapore). Structural themes were the second most common and occurred in both countries in 60% of the cases, and political themes were third in place, but more so in Florida (±50%) than in Singapore, where only one case in five appeared. Symbolic issues were least often discussed, although more noticeably in Singapore. Bolman and Deal noted that

> administrators were more likely to recognize and articulate structural than symbolic issues. Policies, procedures, legal requirements, committees, and control systems appeared to be recognized features of life in schools everywhere. **Symbolic issues, on the other hand, often lurked in the background without being made explicit by the case writer (principals).** (p. 318; emphasis added)

The results of the study also indicated that leaders "rarely use more than two frames and almost never all four. In each sample less than a

quarter of the administrators used more than two frames, and only 1 in 20 used all four" (Bolman & Deal, 1992, p. 316). The researchers employed regression analysis to determine the combination of frames associated with effectiveness as a manager and as a leader in the samples. This resulted in a number of findings that are useful to this study. The authors reported several important implications of the study, noting that "the overlap in the qualities of effective managers and effective leaders suggest that leadership and management are harder to distinguish for the school principalship than for many other administrative jobs" (p. 325). They suggested that "symbolic issues, like meaning, faith, and culture, may be more powerful determinants of effectiveness for school principals than for other managers, even across very different cultural and institutional contexts" (p. 324).

The findings appear to confirm the difficulty involved in the existing perceptions of management and leadership roles in the school context cited by other researchers (Bossert & Ogawa, 1995; Greenfield, 1995). The issue of symbolism, its importance relative to leadership effectiveness, and the perceived lack of attention accorded this facet of administration are also important to this study in that the literature relative to the context of leadership in independent schools has alleged the importance of culture, symbolic management, and a loose hierarchy of management and leadership roles. Deal (1991), writing on independent schools, stated that these schools

> solve problems and accomplish organizational goals using symbolic management, . . . [and] are held together by shared policies and standardized practice. . . . Formal roles and relationships are rarely established, and the allocation of responsibilities may shift. . . . Independent schools rely on the potency of rituals, ceremonies, and stories to create cohesion and establish school culture, rather than rigid organizational hierarchies, rules, and policies." (pp. 415-424; emphasis added)

The perceptions of independent school principals relative to the leadership context (Aitken, 1992) and the social context within which they operate (Kane, 1991) provide a challenging area in which to examine factors which may influence success in the role of principal in an independent school.

In *Leadership, Learning, and Renewal: A Study of the Attitudes and Opinions Expressed by Independent School Heads Concerning Their Own Professional Development,* Aitken (1992) identified a number of concerns relevant to leadership in U.S. independent schools:

1. Management demands on independent school principals thwart the fulfillment of their leadership aspirations.

2. Principals would like to reshape their jobs in ways that offer more scope for leadership, but they suspect that their trustees do not fully share this desire.

3. Principals believe that one of their most significant leadership opportunities lies in promoting institutional climate and values.

4. Principals view curriculum development, student discipline, faculty evaluation, and financial responsibilities as management tasks offering little scope for leadership.

5. The more experienced principals tend to relinquish an earlier protagonist stance in school affairs in favor of a perspective emphasizing commitments to the pastoral, governance, and symbolic opportunities of leadership.

6. Principals' perspectives on management, leadership, professional development, and the rewards and challenges of their jobs are differentiated more by age and experience than by gender and schooling.

Grant (1981) implied that the very nature of the public school system--that is, a system that operates through a publicly elected board, a superintendent in a central office, and principals in schools practicing within an umbrella of specific legislative instruments under the auspices of a state (or provincial) bureaucracy--may present a diluted leadership context in that it may unintentionally neutralize the environment, personally, physically, academically, and professionally. Immegart (1988) suggested that a more fertile ground for research in leadership theory may be evident in the independent school in that there exists a requirement for a leader to demonstrate leadership through a personal belief system aligned with that of the institution's philosophy, which places varying degrees of emphasis on specific academic and/or religious matters.

Leadership and Constraints

Constraints exist in virtually any leadership position, and school principals, because of the uniqueness of their organization, may be subject to more constraints than leaders in other organizations are. As previously noted, Greenfield (1995) identified three conditions that shape the demand environment of the school administrator--the moral character of the school as an institution; a highly educated, autonomous, and almost permanent staff; and an environment characterized by continuous threats to its stability. These conditions serve to identify an operational context that is unique to each school and each principal. Eastcott et al. (1974) concluded that

> the administrator in education is confronted by a wide spectrum of immediately present and personally salient constraints on his behavior which have their origin in the personal, situational,

> **political, financial, and value system characteristics of the organizational environment in which he works.** (p. 41; emphasis added)

They defined a constraint as "any more or less constant restriction upon an administrator's action or potential action; in some way the constraint impedes administrative action from being in line with theoretical principles" (p. 1).

Murphy (1987) identified several constraints, which he described as barriers, that can negatively influence principals' leadership: inadequate preparation for instructional leadership, procrastination in attending to curricular and instructional problems in that they do not present immediate demands, perceptions of resentment from teachers for interfering in their professional autonomy when instructional problems arise, and an emphasis by superintendents and central office personnel on principals' management of structural and political issues rather than on instructional leadership. Sweeney (1982, p. 361) noted the effect of clerical and administrative demands that detracted from principals' visiting and interacting with teachers. Further, Good and Brophy (1986) cited school culture, the influence of informal peer networks, finances, parents, and student discipline as detracting from the principal's leadership. Glass (1988; cited in Wirt, 1990), commenting on superintendents, identified lack of finances, ineffective legislation, boards usurping administrative roles, and stress as inhibiting factors. Others (e.g., Highett, 1989; Johnson, 1988) identified extensive lists of constraints inhibiting school effectiveness in public schools.

An examination of constraints relative to independent schools helps us to better understand the role of these principals. Constraints inherent to independent schools may also have an effect on the success of these

principals. Shank (1979; cited in Strood, 1982) stated that the average tenure of U.S. independent school principals was only six years and that only one in 10 retired as principal. Aitken (1992) found that constraints experienced by independent school principals are related to (a) contextual factors, (b) deficiencies in preparation, and (c) ways in which principals think about management and leadership. Aitken suggested an additional constraint, noting that although research related to public school principals yields insights that are applicable in the independent school context, there are limits to their transferability relative to differences in the scope of management and leadership in public and independent schools.

Leadership and School Culture

Researchers have recently placed increased emphasis on the importance of the relationship between culture and effectiveness. For example, Purkey and Smith (1982) and others have suggested that culture may be as much responsible for effective schools as is the principal. Previously referred to as school climate, atmosphere, and personality, the current term *culture* has not been succinctly defined in the literature and varies according to the context or environment within which it is examined and analyzed. Deal and Peterson (1990) stated that

> schools have a culture that is definitely their own. There are, in the school, complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of folkways, mores, and irrational sanctions, a moral code based upon them. There are games, which are sublimated wars, teams, and an elaborate set of ceremonies concerning them. There are traditions, and traditionalists waging their world-old battle against innovators. (p. 132)

The literature relative to school culture describes what is generally perceived as culture and how principals may or should interact with the phenomenon to achieve success. Researchers identified culture according to

their experiential perceptions; and, other than the somewhat generic definition provided by Deal and Peterson (1990), no others were examined here except to explicate the role of the principal and the potential effects of culture upon the success of the principal. Understanding the culture and possessing a personal vision are key requisites which have captured the attention of researchers in this area. Critical to a principal's success is the ability to understand the culture, which involves paying close attention on an ongoing basis to the total school environment, including the community and its parents (Deal, 1990).

Various terms have been used by researchers to denote who can assist in this process of understanding or "reading" the culture. For example, Deal and Peterson (1990) used *priests, storytellers, gossips,* and *spies.* Cross (1990) indicated that these individuals--usually teachers, support staff, trustees, and parents--are only bearers of information. The onus falls on the principal to create or establish a "fit" between what he reads through these individuals, established traditions and symbols, and a personal vision of the school's mission. In this regard, Sergiovanni (1987, 1991), Lambert (1988), and Bolman and Deal (1992) explained that the school's culture itself may determine the degree of success that the principal achieves in implementing this vision and that success depends on the principal's ability to imbue the vision symbolically in order to foster staff cohesion in achieving the mission or changing and improving the culture to accept the vision. Further, Staessens (1991) suggested that the principal can effectively improve or create a better school culture through reading the culture; implementing a vision through symbolic rituals, symbols, ceremonies, and actions; and developing goal consensus through empowerment.

The following chart (Johnson; cited in Deal, 1991, p. 418) displays various perceptions of public and independent school teachers relative to cultural bonds:

	Private Schools	*Public Schools*
Goals	We are committed to honor and excellence.	We are a ship without a rudder. No one is really sure where we are going and if we're going somewhere, why we are going there.
Values	What do we expect first? Consideration and honesty.	What we need in [this school] is "Masterpiece Theater." What we have is "Let's Make a Deal."
Histories	It's [the school] got real roots in the community, a spirit in the parish. . . . People want to pass on what they had, hoping that their children get some of the values they knew.	Our history?
Rituals and Tradition	[Our meetings promote] a real feeling of community, of everybody coming together.	Not many, not any that I can think of. As a matter of fact, every once in a while the principal will say something like "this is a tradition" and usually get a response of laughter.

Elements of the culture such as traditions, ceremonies, rituals, and symbols are important factors maintained from the early beginnings of independent schools in most countries. They still exist today as cornerstones of these schools' reputations. An aura of excellence and trust is commonly perpetuated through descriptions and records of the schools' long history, leadership, cultural development, and special traditions.

The written histories and current literature of these schools invariably referred to the original founders and their exemplary successors. For example, in the United Kingdom, Clark (1979), in *A History of the Cheltenham Ladies' College,* referred to previous literature reviewed for that

1979 history of the then-125-year-old school: "I have found two books very valuable: Mrs. Rikes's *Dorothea Beale of Cheltenham,* and--for the earliest years particularly--Miss Beale's outline *History of the College from 1853-1904*" (p. 11). On the cover page of this 1979 history, Clark noted:

> One hundred and twenty-five years ago, on February the 13th, 1854, the Cheltenham Ladies' College opened in a private house in Cheltenham, with 82 pupils, bringing to fruition plans begun some six months earlier. It is now a great and justly famous public school for nearly 900 girls.

Similarly, on another continent, Sherrington and Prentis (1993), in the preface to *Scots to the Fore: A History of The Scots College, Sydney, 1893-1993,* emphasized the importance of leadership, culture, and tradition:

> One hundred years ago five men with great foresight established the Scots College, a Presbyterian College for Boys. The early formative days were difficult, but with great resolve, determination and faith in the future, they succeeded in laying the foundation for what now must be one of the great Australian schools. . . .
>
> This book describes the College as a place with a life and character of its own; a storehouse of memories, inspirations, and hopes. It demonstrates the tradition of the College built over the last 100 years and the significance of our motto, the aim of which each boy so steadfastly attempts to achieve--that he may be worthy of his forefathers. (n.p.)

Deal (1991), in reference to Al Adams, headmaster of the prestigious Lick-Wilmerding High School in San Francisco, named after two of its founders, Lick and Wilmerding, noted that Adams modelled himself on George Merrill, another school founder who served the school for 45 years. He noted that Adams's initial task was to "hook into the school's roots to recrystallize and articulate its vision" (p. 420). Deal suggested that successful private schools come to be regarded as "beloved institutions" (p. 416) because of a widely held myth or saga "articulated by a visionary leader" (p. 416).

In Deerfield Academy in Deerfield, Massachusetts, Frank Boyden was known for his commitment to building character and creating an intimate relationship between faculty and students. Boyden's legendary insistence that teachers be completely committed to the development of the students in itself became part of the school's cultural saga. Teachers without commitment were in a sense excommunicated. One senior teacher noted that "Boyden . . . exacts a fantastic commitment. If you give it, he expects more. If you don't give it, he carries you, but you don't exist" (Deal, 1991, p. 421).

Gronn (1995), writing on the life of Sir James Darling, commented on his being described as a "very superior" (p. 49) man. In January 1930 Darling left England to become headmaster of Geelong Grammar School in Australia. Gronn noted that within a decade,

> Darling had master-minded Geelong Grammar's transformation from a sleepy, isolated nursery for the landed elite into an educational showpiece, the envy of all its rivals. By 1939, Darling stood pre-eminent, dwarfing his headmaster peers; he was a member of the Schools' Board and of the council of the University of Melbourne, co-founder of the Headmasters' Conference, founder of the Unemployed Boys' Centre in Geelong, of the St John's Fellowship in Melbourne, and of a social settlement in Port Melbourne, active in the Free Library Movement, a prominent Anglican layman, a renowned educational writer, a prolific speechmaker, a ceaseless proponent of educational reform, and president of the Education and Psychology section of ANZAAS. Thus, a pattern had taken root which lasted for the next fifty years or so: numerous involvements at every level of society, in education, social policy and, eventually, broadcasting. (p. 49)

Founders and successive leaders of such schools, such as Adams, who understood the importance of the school's roots and a vision for the school; Boyden, whose particular idiosyncrasies (he would often stroll the campus picking up weeds or litter) and outstanding dedication to students; and Sir James Darling, whose brilliance and dedication to humanity resulted in international recognition, became part of the written history, culture, and

tradition of private schools. Libraries, buildings, chairs, scholarships, and the schools themselves often carry their names.

Attractive and detailed annual prospectuses, calendars, reports, yearbooks, and bulletins provide a developing written history of the independent school's culture and important traditions. A review of annual calendars and reports from schools in the U.K., Australia, and Canada provides evidence of the importance of and emphasis on culture and tradition, often through direct statement. An example is provided in a comment from the headmaster in an annual prospectus (*Cheltenham College Prospectus,* 1996): "Cheltenham College is a great school, with a rich tradition and an enviable reputation" (n.p.). In Australia the program of the Carey Baptist Grammar School (1996) 73rd Annual Speech Night confirmed the importance of tradition, ceremony, and ritual in the introduction and overview of school special events:

> A number of Special Events in the life of the School adds a measure of pomp and circumstance to students' experience, through which we seek to extend their tastes beyond those of 'youth culture,' to expose them to events where a level of dignity and decorum is both expected and required, and to maintain and promote further those elements which reinforce the strong traditions associated with independent School status and practice.
>
> These Special Events also provide opportunities to express many of the cultural and expressive skills learned through the co-curriculum aspects of the School's programme, and constitute a suitable foil to the academic and sporting components of the formal curriculum. (p. 26)

The nature and number of such special traditions, ceremonies, and rituals and the effort expended to ensure their perpetuation confirm their importance to the culture of Carey Baptist Grammar School:

- The Annual Commencement Service was held in St. Paul's Cathedral on February 9th and was a well attended and fitting official commencement to the new School year. The guest preacher was Revd. Dr. Bill Brown, President of the Baptist Union of Victoria.

- The School Fete was held on May 6th and, whilst not being a stunning financial success, was, nonetheless, a great social occasion, and has added new friends to the School, and additional monies to the various sections of the School for the purchase of computing materials for staff and student use. . . .
- The re-dedication of the Memorial Great Hall took place on Thursday, August 17th (the birth date of William Carey). The act of re-dedication was undertaken by the Revd. John Simpson, General Superintendent of the Baptist Union of Victoria; it was presided over by the President of the BUV, the Rev. Dr. Bill Brown; and the Guest of Honour for this ceremony was the Hon. Peter Costello, Deputy Leader of the Federal Liberal Party, and Shadow Treasurer. The ceremony was transmitted to Middle School class-rooms where those students unable to gain seating in the MGH watched with quiet and respectful interest.
- The induction of the new Senior Chaplain, the Revd. Dr. Christopher Page, was conducted at the Collins Street Baptist Church on Sunday, October 22nd, again presided over by the President of the BUV, and conducted by the General Superintendent of the BUV. The Revd. Dr. Ken Manley, Principal of Whitley College, was the guest preacher, who addressed the role of Chaplaincy in Schools.
- The Leavers' Service and Valedictory Dinner were held in St. John's Church Camberwell and the Camberwell Civic Centre on November 23rd. This is a highly regarded evening, at which leavers, their parents, and their teachers meet in a service of thanksgiving followed by a formal dinner at which anecdotes and memories are exchanged.
- The annual Service of Nine Lessons and Carols will be held in St. Paul's Cathedral on Thursday, December 7th at 8:00 pm. We again invite the whole of the Carey family to attend and enjoy an evening of selected Biblical passages and carols commemorating the message of the Birth of Christ. (Carey Baptist Grammar School, 1996, pp. 26-27)

A similar emphasis on leadership, culture, and tradition is also evident in the prospectus of Canadian independent schools. The mission and history statement of Ontario's Lakefield College School's (1996) *Prospectus* further confirm the importance of tradition:

> Founded in 1879, Lakefield College School has grown from a school of twenty boys on a fifteen acre site to two hundred and sixty boys and girls on a campus of one hundred and fifty-five acres, on Lake Katchewanooka. The natural splendor of the country landscape continues to inspire an educational experience which is distinctly Canadian. Alexander Mackenzie, Headmaster from 1894 to 1938, established the school's educational philosophy of combining a rigorous academic curriculum with a full and enriching program of sports and outdoor education. The

> school motto--*mens sana in corpore sano--a sound mind in a sound body*--reflects Mackenzie's original ideal and is reflected in the programs of the school today.
>
> The wooded campus, commonly known as *The Grove,* combines the original school house and renovated century homes with newer classrooms and residences. Through creative blending of original structures with newer ones, the school has evolved into a warm, unpretentious environment that expresses well Lakefield's special combination of tradition and innovation. (p. 1)

The written histories and current publications of these schools serve to reinforce perceptions and influence all constituents of the school community, as well as new students. These documents are replete with ongoing references to leadership, tradition, ceremonies, rituals, and symbolism, which are critical elements in perpetuating the school's culture.

Leadership and Symbolism

Bolman and Deal (1992) stated that "effectiveness as a manager and as a leader actually overlaps more for school principals than for managers in business or higher education because of the central role of symbols and culture in schools" (pp. 314-329). As previously indicated, these researchers (1984, 1991) condensed theories of organizations into four categories labeled *frames*:

> The structural frame emphasizes rationality, efficiency, structure, and policies. The human resource frame focuses on the interaction between individual and organizational needs. The political frame emphasizes conflict among different groups and interests for scarce resources. **The symbolic frame sees a chaotic world in which meaning and predictabilities are socially constructed and facts are interpretive rather than objective. Symbolic leaders pay diligent attention to myth, ritual ceremony, stories, and other symbolic forms.** (pp. 198-199; emphasis added)

Bolman and Deal (1992) argued that leadership is contextual because "different situations require different patterns of thinking" (p. 315). For example, the ability to employ certain aspects of a particular frame may be

inconsequential in some roles; but in others, such an inability could have serious results. They indicated that both qualitative and quantitative results of their research suggest that "the ability to use multiple frames is critical to principals' effectiveness as both manager and leader" (p. 328). Further, they noted that

> a survey measure of leadership orientations showed that leadership effectiveness is strongly associated with a **symbolic orientation** but only moderately related to the structural frame. Effectiveness as a manager is highly associated with a structural orientation, but the **symbolic frame** is more strongly associated with managerial effectiveness for principals than for administrators in other sectors. (p. 328; emphasis added)

The authors stated that "the human resource and political frames are significant positive predictors of success as both a manager and a leader" (p. 328). However, "preservice and inservice programs for school administrators rarely give much attention to **symbolic and political skills, yet our results show that they are crucial components for effective leadership**" (p. 328; emphasis added). Bolman and Deal identified the symbolic dimensions of leadership as either

> Inspirational - inspires others to loyalty and enthusiasm; communicates a strong sense of vision; or
> Charismatic - imaginative, creative, emphasizes culture and values;
> models organizational aspirations. (p. 319)

Studies by Clark (1975), Hanaway and Abromowitz (1985), Chubb (1988), Bryk and Driscoll (1988), and Johnson (1990) on public and independent schools suggest that independent schools have a competitive advantage in that their size, autonomy, selectivity, and stability encourage a dependence on cultural cohesion rather than on rational rules to maintain school stability. Johnson (cited in Deal, 1991) distinguished between cultural and rational bonds:

> Cultural bonds include the shared purposes, values, traditions, and history that promote harmonious behavior and a sense of community. They are internal links that draw participants together through shared meaning. They promote commitment rather than compliance. . . . By contrast, rational bonds include rules, roles, functions, penalties and formal authority that specify and regulate the behavior of individuals in organizations. They presume reluctance and dissent rather than commitment and accord. They unify participants externally by defining their responsibilities, roles, and relationships, by telling them what they can, cannot, and must do. (p. 417)

To attract students, independent schools create a unique identity, setting them apart and relying on symbols and traditions to secure commitment and loyalty from students, teachers, and parents. Clark (1975) concluded that unique private institutions exhibited similar characteristics such as a commonly shared myth or saga promoted by a visionary principal, perpetuated through committed followers, reinforced by distinctive practices, and supported by loyal students, parents, and alumni. One of the implications of these studies is that public schools should "emulate private schools by focusing more attention on symbols and meaning rather than on management and control" and "that private school leadership must constantly reinforce cultural patterns and cautiously reshape tradition as new challenges present themselves" (p. 418).

Sergiovanni (1991) and others have recognized symbolism as an important factor in successful leadership. His continuum of required leader characteristics and abilities--technical, human, and educational--has expanded to include the facet of symbolism, which has been evidenced in the private school context for some time.

Further, Deal (1990) noted that principals, in order to reinforce cultural patterns, need to agree and ensure that symbols and symbolic activity play an important role in creating a cohesive community, and they need to give time and attention to symbolic issues (p. 419). He indicated that effective

principals "reinforce cultural bonds by articulating values, anointing and celebrating heroes and heroines, convening rituals, encouraging ceremonies, telling stories, and 'working' the network of cultural players" (p. 420).

Summary

The following perceptions resulted from this review of the literature relative to leadership and effectiveness, constraints, culture, and symbolism.

Immegart (1988) noted that "there really are no commonly accepted conceptualizations, and there is very little of what could really be called leadership theory to guide inquiry" (p. 272) and that "efforts thus far may have focussed on the wrong thing" (p. 273). In recent decades the research on leadership has confirmed that individuals occupying administrative positions exhibit two general facets of leader behavior: involvement with individuals and involvement with task. Recently, research has begun to differentiate between management functions and leadership roles and to conceptualize higher-order leaders as transformational and cultural. Characteristics of effective leaders have been categorized by scholars and emulated by practitioners. More recently, the environment within which the leader functions has received the attention of researchers. The influence of the leadership context is perceived by many as a critical factor influencing effective leadership and by others as *the* critical factor; thus the study of organizational culture has received considerable attention. Several promising methods have been developed to examine the context of leadership; however, their usefulness is determined by researchers' and participants' role perceptions across different administrative contexts, such as the school administrator and the business executive. The categorizations of theories of

organizations have resulted in several approaches to examining leaders across different environments or contexts.

The constraints with which administrators must cope have received relatively little attention in the research and require further attention in that a capacity to perceive constraints would have a strong influence on effectiveness.

The literature, particularly the recent research relative to culture and symbolism, provides valid approaches to studying the leadership of principals in an environment that is often considerably different from that in public schools. The literature has confirmed that the independent school context differs considerably from that of the public school and that culture and symbolism are important aspects of the leadership context. Longevity in the position is not the norm for U.S. independent school principals; however, success in the position may result from their expertise and ability to understand the complexity and the uniqueness of their leadership context and the requirements for effectiveness relative to the constraints, the culture, and the symbolism involved in their school context.

Researchers such as Sergiovanni (1991), Bryk et al. (1993), Deal and Peterson (1990), and others have begun to examine the influence of culture and symbolism relative to successful leadership in schools. Because greater attention is currently being directed to school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Lieberman, 1988; Peterson, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1991) and symbolism (Bolman & Deal, 1992; Reitzug & Reeves, 1990), research related to public schools may in time become more relevant to independent schools. The common practices and understandings of successful independent school principals may be worthy of consideration by administrators of public schools that are operating in an increasingly independent environment.

The literature on leadership and effectiveness, constraints, culture, and symbolism provided several avenues to examine leadership in independent schools; however, Bolman and Deal's (1992) frames provide an effective conceptual framework through which to view the leadership context of the independent school principal. Their frames are particularly suited to the study in that they not only provide insight into the structural, political, and human resource dimensions of leadership, but they also include the symbolic dimension frequently cited in the research relative to independent schools, and increasingly so in the literature on leadership.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The method used in the study is presented in this chapter. The rationale for employing a qualitative approach and the advantages of the interview process are discussed, and the approach to selecting the respondents and accumulating the data is specified. The methods of attaining reliability, validity, and trustworthiness are reviewed. Ethical concerns, assumptions, and the limitations and delimitations of the study are addressed.

Research Design

Principals from eight accredited, funded, independent schools in Alberta were asked to participate in the study. Participants had spent at least three years in the school as an administrator or teacher and had, minimally, one year of prior experience as a principal or a vice-principal in the school. This selection criterion was used because it is common practice in an independent school for individuals to accept the principalship for a period of time, return to the classroom, and again assume the principal's role. Additionally, many independent schools hire from within, and first-year principals have often held other administrative roles and are very aware of the principal's role. Consultation with the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta and Alberta Education occurred prior to selection and formal correspondence with the schools (see Appendix B).

A qualitative approach was employed using multiple audiotaped interviews (see Appendix C for interview schedule), an ongoing journal, school policy documents, and observation. A personal interview with a

maximum duration of two hours with each principal was completed. A second interview was conducted in some instances, and additional telephone interviews were employed. The interviews were transcribed and the content analyzed using summary sheets, memoing, and coding to summarize the information. Open-ended questions were used to enhance the accumulation of thick description to facilitate later analysis of patterns and commonalities. A search for common themes among independent schools and principals occurred as a group (eight), and by groupings (four secular and four denominational). Open-ended questions provided data relevant to those factors perceived to lead to success in the role of principal in an independent school.

Interviews

A qualitative approach was utilized in the proposed study. In that the interviewer entered the world of the participants to elicit information without altering the reality of that world, the research was naturalistic. Although there are strengths and drawbacks to the interview approach, its advantages in this study outweighed its drawbacks. Greenfield (cited in Immegart & Boyd, 1979) noted that data drawn from interviews

> speak meaningfully and powerfully for individuals in specific situations, yet they find a larger significance as well. They show how individuals' sense of themselves and their world has consequences in that world, and they suggest how these meanings and consequences can be expressed in typifications, symbols, or theories that provide fresh insights into social reality. (p. 136)

The use of interviews has been well supported in the literature as an accepted means of data collection (e.g., Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Guba & Lincoln, 1982, 1985; Owens, 1982). The interview approach has the distinct advantage of being able to promote a greater depth of response than

does the use of an instrument such as a questionnaire. Additionally, the interviewer can encourage free-flowing discussion to enhance the responses to questions as well as to clarify the questions and answers. The nonverbal interaction in an interview situation is helpful in identifying sensitive or misunderstood questions. Additionally, the small number of schools in the sample lent itself to this approach.

Analysis of Documents

A review of relevant documents such as policy handbooks, board minutes, school histories, newsletters, annual reports, and financial statements was undertaken so that I would become acquainted with, understand, and appreciate the administrative, historical, and current contexts of each school.

Meetings

I had hoped to attend school board or parent-administrator committee meetings, expecting that information from these meetings would be helpful in understanding the context and in interpreting the interviews. The timing of the interviews and the infrequency of board meetings in independent schools did not permit attendance at these meetings; however, one parent meeting was attended.

Reliability

Castetter and Heisler (1980) indicated that reliability is related to "the accuracy, [the] trustworthiness of data produced" (p. 205). LeCompte and Goetz (1982) concluded that "reliability refers to the extent to which studies can be replicated" (p. 35). In this study whether or not the principals would

have responded differently to the interview questions after some time had elapsed or to another interviewer is debatable. However, an opportunity to review the transcript and follow-up interviews indicated overall consistency, although in some situations elaboration and clarification were proffered by the respondents.

Validity

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) indicated that the interview approach is an excellent instrument to achieve validity in that it lends itself to evaluation during the process. In this study the opportunity to spend several hours with each respondent; to be able to rephrase, discuss, and clarify responses; and to conduct follow-up interviews provided a high degree of confidence in the findings. Whether or not the findings can be generalized to other situations is a critical aspect of external validity. In the proposed study, the findings were perceived to be generalizable only to other Alberta independent schools having similar enrollments and grade levels.

Among other issues such as choice of participants, methods of data collection, and interpretation of data, validity is greatly influenced by the respondents' perception of the researcher. Whether or not the interviewer is close to or a member of the group is important relative to the participants' perceptions of the individual's credibility. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) stipulated that "other researchers will fail to obtain comparable findings unless they develop corresponding social positions" (p. 37). I have had experience as an administrator in public school systems, which also involved coordination and liaison with independent schools within those systems. Additionally, a recent field experience within an independent system provided me with excellent background experience.

Justification for the Method

Researchers in the field have indicated the validity of the method chosen for the study (e.g., Culbertson, 1988; Greenfield, 1973; Immegart & Boyd, 1979; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Given the purpose of this study and the relatively small number of independent schools in Alberta, the interview approach allowed the attainment of a more thorough in-depth analysis than other methods such as a questionnaire would have. Further, this method has been successfully employed by many other researchers.

Pilot Study

Two principals, one from a secular school and one from a denominational school, were chosen for pilot-study interviews. Conditions identical to those anticipated for the study--that is, the method of initial contact and the appropriate correspondence--were used. Care was taken to have similar physical environments and recording equipment. The pilot study identified some flaws in the interview questions and provided additional insights which led to some additional questions. The pilot study assisted in identifying some mechanical problems as well as in verifying the timing of the actual interviews.

Ethical Concerns

The number of independent schools in Alberta and in the study was small. The researcher perceived correctly that communication among these institutions, particularly those chosen for the study, was minimal. Regardless, stringent care was taken to ensure anonymity at all times. An additional correspondence requested the permission of respondents for the researcher to use direct (anonymous) quotations in the study (see

Appendix B). Prior permission was obtained from the University of Alberta relative to the University Standards for the Protection of Human Participants policy (1994).

Delimitations

The study was delimited to independent school principals in Alberta in accredited secular and denominational schools. The study focused on only the principals' perceptions of factors that may affect leadership success in the independent school. Only principals who had, minimally, one year of previous experience as an administrator in the school were asked to participate. The study was limited to an analysis of the experiences and perceptions of eight independent school principals as well as the relevant documents in each situation.

Assumptions

Research has indicated that independent school principals are aware of and have concerns relative to the administrative context in independent schools (Aitken, 1992). It was assumed that the principals participating in the study were aware of the factors relative to leadership, school culture, constraints, and symbolism that influence success in the role of the principal. It was also assumed that the principals were knowledgeable about the governance and organizational conditions that influenced the operation of their school and were able to evaluate them. Further, it was assumed that the respondents' perceptions expressed in the interviews would be presented honestly and accurately and that their responses would reflect the actual conditions described. Finally, it was assumed that the principals'

responses could be categorized in a manner that would provide increased knowledge about leadership in independent schools.

Limitations

The study had the following limitations:

1. Accuracy was affected by the experiential and perceptual data obtained through interviews.

2. The availability of the participants to acquaint themselves with the interviewer and to be interviewed for a considerable period of time was limited by their personal willingness and individual commitments.

Summary

This chapter presented the methods employed to answer the research questions. Principals in accredited, funded, secular and denominational independent schools in Alberta were interviewed using multiple audiotaped interviews. Open-ended questions were used to enhance accumulation of thick description. Data from the interviews were transcribed, and the content was analyzed. Additionally, journals, school policy documents, and observation were employed.

The reasons for selection of the qualitative approach to the study were discussed. A description of the methods used in the conduct of the research and their applicability to the study were presented. Finally, ethical concerns, delimitations, assumptions, and limitations of the study were identified.

CHAPTER 4

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENT PRINCIPALS AND THEIR SCHOOLS

This chapter examines the characteristics of independent schools in Alberta generally and, more specifically, those of the schools and the eight principals selected for the study. First, a brief historical review of the development and types of independent schools in Alberta is presented. Second, the particular characteristics of the schools in the study are presented. Third, some of the personal attributes of the principals and their relationship to their schools are presented relative to their selection for the study.

Characteristics of Alberta Independent Schools

The right to choose Catholic or Protestant schools and the right to obtain funding for all 12 grades equal to that provided to public schools was guaranteed by the Alberta Act of 1905. As a result, there has been little need to establish a system of private Catholic schools in Alberta. Bergen (1989), writing on parent choice, was cautious in giving a synopsis of parent choice of schools in Canada because of the diversity of the country and individual provincial legislation. However, he suggested three basic shifts that have influenced the demand and subsequent provision by government for parent choice in the education of their children: (a) the increased secularization of society and thus public schools, (b) a shift from a bare tolerance of minority language to a strong assertion of language rights, and (c) an increased emphasis on human rights as they apply to education (pp. 147-148).

In 1958 the Association of Private Schools and Colleges was organized in Alberta with a charter membership representing 19 different private schools. In 1968 a campaign led by a group of private schools resulted in provincial funding for these schools (Bergen, 1989). Currently, independent schools receive provincial-government grants equal to approximately 75% of those provided to public and separate schools. Until recently, Alberta independent schools were classified by the province into four categories that evolved partially to satisfy legislation and funding and partly because of their individual missions and goals. Although Alberta Education has recently discontinued the use of these categories, they are helpful in identifying the types of independent schools in Alberta:

1. Category 1: secular or denominational schools approved for government funding;
2. Category 2: schools for the handicapped approved for government funding;
3. Category 3: language schools; and
4. Category 4: secular or denominational schools not approved for government funding.

Although the development of independent schools in Alberta has not been without controversy, the relationship between the provincial government and public school systems has generally been one of cooperation. Certainly, issue-specific instances of controversy and the ongoing resistance of the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta School Boards Association to independent schools are identifiable; however, those issues were not within the parameters of the study. Bergen (1989) wrote:

> A poll conducted in Alberta in 1984 found that 93 percent of respondents believed that parents should have the right to choose their children's school, and 77 percent believed that such choices should be backed by tax dollars. Another study found that 79 percent of school superintendents and 88 percent of school board chairpersons supported the freedom to choose private schools; the overwhelming majority of both groups believed that public educators needed to understand better why some parents were choosing private schools, and to make appropriate accommodations in an effort to prevent the establishment of more of them. (p. 177)

The success of alternate programs, the province's decision in 1971 to authorize the use of languages other than English and French in public schools, a 1985 court ruling that parents in Edmonton had a right to publicly funded schools in which all instruction would be in French (Bergen, 1986), the findings of the Final Report of the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding (1984), and the recent introduction of charter schools may have fostered an ongoing tolerance of diversity within the provincial educational environment and, among some, a different perception of public schools. Writing on the nature of independent schools, Bergen (1981) stated that

> the whole society has become more secular in its orientation. The consequence of this change is that most public schools have of necessity become secular and no longer reflect a "Christian" or "Christian Protestant" ethos. Those members of society who found the public schools of three or four decades ago sufficiently "Christian" to provide the kind of educational environment they wanted for their children, no longer find such to be the case. Consequently, in recent years there has been a stronger interest in private schools among more conservative denominations. (p. 3)

Apart from the "Christian rationale," Bergen (1990) added these remarks:

> Others, generally secular in nature, are established in order to meet specific educational needs for which the provincial school systems have not adequately provided, such as the instruction of second languages or the education of handicapped children. Some are established in order to provide instruction from the perspective of a particular educational philosophy or methodology. Also, some elite private schools have been founded to serve the

> process of social selection in establishing "the individual as belonging to an appropriate group." The latter schools can be afforded mainly by affluent parents. (p. 3)

Bergen (1981, 1990) identified the forces that have given Alberta independent schools their particular character. For the purpose of the study, schools that were chosen provided a representative sample of independent schools in the provincial context described by Bergen.

Profile of Schools in the Interview Sample

Alberta Education statistics for 1997 identify 204 approved private schools in Alberta. Of these, 145 are accredited, funded schools (see Table 2). In that this group of independent schools comprised the substantial majority of independent schools and were both accredited and funded, it was chosen as the group from which to draw the sample. Well-established schools from a group with the largest enrollment (at the time of selection), offering minimally a high school program, were selected. Principals' experience in an administrative position provided the final criterion. Four of the schools selected were identified as secular schools and the remainder as denominational schools. The characteristics of the selected schools relative to enrollment, grade level, founding year, secular or denominational status, and residential status are not presented in tabular form in order to preserve anonymity. However, some characteristics are presented for groups of schools in the next paragraph.

Four of the eight respondent schools were located in rural settings on several acres of property owned by the school authority. All were reasonably close to a large urban center. Two of the schools were located within large urban centers and owned the property. One leased the facility from a public school board. One of the schools was situated in a small

Table 2

Selected Characteristics of the 145 Accredited, Funded, Independent Schools in Alberta, March 1997

	Enrollment		Location	
Grade level	Minimum	Maximum	Rural	Urban
ECS-1		430		1
ECS-2	80	450		3
ECS-6	120	306	1	7
ECS-7		18	1	
ECS-8	46	60	2	
ECS-9	39	545	18	12
ECS-10	24	124	2	3
ECS-11	29	130	1	3
ECS-12	26	606	11	8
K-7		18	1	
K-11		35	1	
K-12		700	1	
1-3		11	1	
1-4		45		1
1-5		22	1	
1-7	9	18	2	
1-8		12	1	
1-9	31	40	4	2
1-10	16	35	2	2
1-11	20	136	2	
1-12	15	550	9	5
2-9		29	1	
2-11		45	1	
3-9		15	1	
4-6		50		1
4-7		12		1
5-11		7	1	
7-9	108	150	1	1
7-12	50	230	1	3
8-12		22	1	
9-12	49	175	1	1
10-12	12	4,700	3	13
Special ed.	35	60	2	4

Note. The table includes regular, special needs, language, music, and cultural schools. *ECS* (Early Childhood Services) in Alberta refers to programs for regular and special-needs students, who may begin a program three years prior to Grade 1. The designation *K* stands for *kindergarten.* Urban schools are identified as those within or very near Calgary and Edmonton. All others are designated as rural. A complete listing of school names, mailing addresses, and grades of all independent schools in Alberta is included in Appendix A.

community close to a large urban center. This school was constructed in conjunction with a religious facility. All facilities provided ample space and capital equipment for the needs of the current students. There was evidence of ongoing additions previously built to serve increasing enrollments over the years. One of the schools had constructed a major state-of-the-art fine-arts addition within the past two years, and another had acquired an entirely new facility that provided ample unused space for future enrollment increases.

Characteristics of the Principals

The selection process utilizing length of the school's operation, enrollment, program, and experiential criteria resulted in a group of all-male respondents. Years of experience in the principalship ranged from 1 to 27. The respondents ranged in age from 45 to 54 years. Academically, their qualifications ranged from the Bachelor's degree to the PhD. The principal respondents entered their independent school environments from different venues: the public and separate school systems, the postsecondary system, university upon graduating, and other independent schools. The respondent group comprised a mix of individuals from different Canadian provinces and other countries. Only one principal was born in Alberta.

Career aspirations of the respondents varied. One of the principals was resigning after many years to attend graduate school and continue a career in other educational endeavors. Another aspired to a superintendent's position within his school. Three were committed to completing their careers within their schools. The remaining three had no specific aspirations but felt that they would remain with their schools for the foreseeable future. All eight principals expressed a deep commitment to their schools.

Summary

The study was based on interviews with eight principals of independent schools in Alberta. The schools were selected on the basis of enrollment, a high school program, longevity of operation, and experiential criteria for principals. Alberta has provided a reasonably stable and cooperative environment for the development of independent schools. The majority of independent schools in Alberta are accredited. Most have evolved from a broad parental perspective that public schools were becoming too secularized or were not adequately providing for the specific educational needs of their children, or both.

Thus the study's sampling consisted of four secular and four denominational schools. School facilities and services ranged from paralleling those of Alberta public schools to, in some cases, far exceeding them. All met basic public school requirements relative to staff, programs, and facilities. Six of the schools were located in rural areas with easy access to urban centers. The principal respondents were all academically and experientially well qualified coming to the current role from varied backgrounds. All were lifelong career educators who exhibited a high degree of commitment to their schools.

CHAPTER 5

EXTERNAL FACTORS PERCEIVED TO INFLUENCE LEADERSHIP

The data obtained during the study were analyzed relative to three categories: external factors perceived to influence leadership, internal factors perceived to influence leadership, and perceptions of professional and personal characteristics relevant to successful leadership in independent schools. This chapter presents the findings about external factors perceived by the respondents to influence leadership. First, the chapter examines the perceived influences of provincial legislation on independent school principals. Second, the perceived influences of the relationship with Alberta Education are detailed. Third, the perceived influences of other significant organizations and individuals on independent school principals are presented. The purpose of the chapter is to address Specific Research Question 1:

What influences are exerted on the principal's role in an independent school by the legislation, Alberta Education, and other significant external organizations and individuals?

Some of the quotations in this chapter and the following chapters have been paraphrased in order to improve readability without affecting their meaning.

Legislation

Some Canadian provinces have chosen to enact specific legislation relative to the establishment and operation of private schools. However, in Alberta the School Act (1988, chapter S-3.1) stipulates the requirements for the establishment and operation of public, separate, charter, and private schools. Government legislation in Alberta refers to independent schools as

private. As previously indicated, school operators in Alberta generally prefer to use the term *independent* to refer to their schools. Grants to private schools in Alberta began in 1967. Currently, private schools operate under the School Act and are funded through a school grants regulation under the auspices of Alberta Education. As stated by Bergen (1989), the development of independent schools in Alberta has been generally characterized by a cooperative relationship between schools and government. The perceptions of the majority of principals in the study were summarized in one respondent's statement: "I have not found the School Act or any of the provincial regulations . . . a handicap or interfering with the role of the school or my leadership or administration." The respondents in the study reported perceiving no effects of the legislation and its regulations and Alberta Education policies that directly influenced their leadership except in the areas of funding, programming, and reporting.

Funding

All but one of the respondents concluded that an increase in funding would enhance their effectiveness in the areas of staffing, purchasing capital items and supplies, and transportation. One of the respondents who indicated that funding at par with public and separate school systems would be desirable was actively involved in attempting to influence legislators through the political venue:

> Right now the independent schools are being treated very prejudicially because of the historical status of the Corporation of Alberta, and that document only anticipated two school systems; they hadn't anticipated that there'd be a need for a third system. So right now we're being treated in a very prejudicial fashion. But there is seemingly nothing that we can do about it except continue to try to point that out to the government and hope that they will increase the funding that they give to independent schools. Statistics show that independent schools, despite being

> treated with less funding, given less funding, are still growing and will continue to grow. And I think what the government is trying to do is to find a vehicle for this expression of choice. The thing that we have been arguing for is choice, and the government seems to be picking up on that philosophically and allowing more choice within the public schools, charter schools, and alternative programs.

The remainder of this group perceived the legislation and regulations to be the domain of their trustees and perceived themselves as advisors. Not all of the respondents sensed that increased funding is desirable. One respondent indicated that the trustees perceived funding under the current legislation to be adequate, stating that the trustees would not involve themselves in seeking legislative change relative to the current funding formula. He noted that the trustees believed that increased funding could be accompanied by caveats that would reduce the school's level of autonomy. He did not feel that current funding detracted from his success as a principal. The issue of equal funding, although perceived as desirable among all but one of the respondents in this study, is often of more concern to principals and boards of larger independent schools with unique, well-established programs who suspect that increased funding may result in less autonomy (Kane, 1991).

Six respondents noted a potential advantage to the current funding formula relative to their leadership in that the management of fund-raising activities developed a closer relationship with the trustees, the staff, and a network of contacts in the business world. An affirmation of the value of using fund raising as a teaching mechanism relative to marketing, financial management, public relations, and development of interpersonal skills was also noted by five respondents.

Provincial Program of Studies

The provincial Program of Studies was regarded to have an overall positive influence on the respondents' success as principals, although there were some aspects of the program that caused ongoing as well as sporadic time-consuming difficulties that some respondents felt detracted from other leadership tasks. All respondents reacted negatively to a hypothetical comment suggesting legislation that enabled the development of a school-based program of studies. Also, all indicated the necessity for and general approval of legislation relative to the program of studies, suggesting that they would not be equipped to undertake such a task. They expressed general satisfaction with the current program, suggesting that it provided a "superstructure," a "framework," and "parameters" for their leadership roles. Three principals indicated that it provided a degree of security in their ongoing interactions with some trustees and with members of the public or religious denominations.

As noted above, the respondents indicated some ongoing dissatisfaction or problems with particular aspects of the program of studies that they felt detracted from their ability to achieve certain specific goals or their overall mission. Often these were unique and situation-specific problems; however, some were mentioned frequently. For example, five of the respondents indicated concern with the lack of flexibility regarding the number of credits required for a high school diploma. One respondent's comment accurately summarized the perceptions of five others:

> They're very rigorous in this province, very rigorous. There is not much choice, and there's not much flexibility. Now, in an academic school, that really isn't a hassle; but if you wanted to open the doors, if you wanted to provide more opportunities, a wider range, then these regulations would have to change, and there would have to be more flexibility in the administration, in the whole operation of the high school diploma system and the credit

> system. I sometimes think--and I know why government has to do it--measuring learning in terms of hours is inappropriate in this age. The Carnegie unit is a thing of the past; it belongs in the ark. And it's quality, not quantity, that counts.

The respondents referred to the Alberta Program of Studies as "well thought out" and "a good provincially based curriculum that's got to make for a strong academic program--I have no problem using it." Similar comments were expressed by all respondents, including, perhaps surprisingly, the denominational school principals.

Relative to unique and situation-specific problems, two principals from denominational schools noted that potential program problems that would influence their leadership were for the most part accommodated by the provincial legislation. For example, one principal stated that

> if it were a situation where Alberta Education came in and said, "Hey, you have to teach evolution; you cannot bring in creationism," then I would have problems. Then we would really be at loggerheads as far as that's concerned. But basically the freedom is there. Our religious studies program receives provincial approval, and the students get credit for it. It comes in under the category of a locally developed course. They evaluate it every five or six years, and as long as they continue to approve it, then we have no problems.

Another stated that

> the curriculum allows us enough room so that philosophically we're teaching English or social studies or science from a Christian perspective, and if we want to bring in an alternative material, there is a process we can go through to have that authorized--we've even got our Bible courses approved. We offer credits for our Bible courses as a locally approved course.

The program of studies affected individual schools in unique ways; for example, one respondent noted that

> traditionally, there was no such thing as social studies; it was history and geography taught as two separate subjects, and that's one of the big things in this school: We wanted to continue teaching them as two separate subjects. It was a real battle getting this curriculum approved.

As in public and separate schools, ongoing changes and innovations in the program also provided sources of consternation for the respondents. A principal in one of the smaller schools noted that

> you have to be careful you don't get stuck in ruts. On the other hand, there is a problem with too many curricular changes. Sometimes you don't always know which way or where you are going, and you have to be flexible. I do realize that change is necessary; it's just that they come so rapidly that it's very, very difficult to keep up, to stay abreast. That's where you need good teachers, good staff, so you can farm out some of these changes.

This principal found it ironic that he was so capable of adapting to changes or innovations in the program of studies as the leader of a traditional school.

The principals indicated that, although achievement tests and the diploma exams originally caused problems and concerns, they had been overcome, and the tests and exams were regarded as useful instruments relative to their leadership role:

> Ultimately, parents will use the results of the achievement tests and diploma exams as the yardstick. It becomes a lot easier now because the government can say, "Your students have to write these exams and do well," which they do. But before that, how do you gauge till they get to university? It's a lot easier now when we meet with the regional office representative and say, "Here are the results of the diploma exams. They're 15% higher than the provincial average. Do you want to look at our curriculum closely?" And he says, "But why?" So they've accepted that whatever we're doing, we're maintaining a high standard.

Another principal, in reference to achievement tests and diploma exams, commented that

> they help us. We want our students to be able to achieve the skills that are important for being successful in society, and so we have a strong commitment to trying to meet and exceed the provincial standards. We want our students to be up there in the top group, and so far they have been.

The principals generally agreed that the results of the achievement tests and diploma exams were useful public-relations and strategic-planning tools. One principal asserted that he would like to "see changes in regards to

electives, areas where kids could find a strength in a subject and spend a little more time on it" and that

> the fact that we have to get through this curriculum to set ourselves up for these so-called almighty achievement tests at the end of the line, and because we're accountable now for the results and the parents know what the results are and the province wants to know, and we're being judged on that, our hand's forced: We have to follow the guidelines.

He felt that more flexibility in the areas of electives and the removal of the achievement tests would have the following result:

> We would do better in certain areas, we definitely would. As far as educating the student in regards to attaining the results, maybe we would go down a little bit. But in regards to trying to create more interest in certain areas and enhancing these kids in certain areas, I think that would be true. We do provide enrichment for junior high ; in high school we don't have time for that; we don't.

Although the program of studies was perceived to create a number of ongoing unique problems and issues for the respondents, none were reported to have affected their leadership role in a negative manner.

Reporting

Certain requirements flowing from the Alberta legislation caused concern for some principals. A greater emphasis on accountability resulting in requirements for more thorough annual educational and financial reports, as well as new filing procedures and due dates, resulted in increased time commitments from the respondents. These were perceived to be required mundane tasks that detracted from their leadership role. Those principals who had little clerical assistance available to them were very concerned that the government's emphasis on accountability was in fact reducing their effectiveness.

> I can see there is a need for them to want this from us. It's just that they're not tailored for independent schools, and I think we're working on that. The next thing they want is a three-year

> business plan, and there's going to be a meeting, and they're specifically going to give us a handbook for independent schools. . . . We said, "Look, it's one thing asking for an annual report from every single school that's independent, but the public board has to provide only one report for its 300 schools or whatever."

Another commented that

> the irony that I'm finding over the last couple of years is, they're cutting their staff down considerably, and yet the amount of paperwork that's being shuffled across our desk in regards to their three-year-plan concepts in just about everything you can imagine has been just unbelievable, and I don't know who's going to be looking at all this stuff.

However, one respondent characterized the others' general perceptions of the Alberta legislation, regulations, and policies:

> The government provides the institutional framework and the institutional focus that has to be there. It's sort of like the spine or the backbone, and without it, heaven knows what the institution would do. An institution would have to create all those vertebrae.

and further:

> I think it goes without saying that obviously we are bound by the requirements of the School Act and any of the regulations, and we follow them and we are monitored quite thoroughly by the regional office. There are forms to be filled out and standards to be met, and we look on it as our responsibility to meet these standards; we think it's very, very important.

In summary, the legislation and its implementation were perceived by the respondents more as contributing to success in their schools than not. Although improvements in funding, programming, curriculum, and reporting requirements would be welcomed, all respondents commented positively relative to the legislation and the manner in which it provided a framework for leadership.

Alberta Education

The regional offices of education in Alberta are charged with the task of ensuring that public, separate, and independent schools operate within the provincial legislation. The local regional office monitors all independent schools annually and files with the regional office, the principals, and the governing bodies of the schools reports regarding the program, the requirements for teacher certification, health and safety reports, and other requirements of the School Act (1988) and the Private Schools Regulation. Personnel from Alberta Education are often involved in evaluating private schools, and the report is considered to be public after being tabled at a regular meeting of the governing body or after 60 days from the date of issue by Alberta Education. Independent schools are assigned a liaison consultant from one of several regional offices situated in five Alberta cities. The Alberta government has recently closed or reduced the services provided by several of these regional offices.

Regional office consultants assist principals through consultation and perform monitoring and duties related to teacher certification. Personnel from the regional offices previously acted as signing authorities for the certification of teachers in independent schools and private Early Childhood Services programs. The designated signing authority function is similar to that of the superintendent in public and separate school systems. In 1996 Alberta Education contracted the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta to provide those services.

In addition to the regulatory duties, the regional offices provide the link to Alberta Education as the main source of information regarding provincial regulations and policies and current educational issues. The respondents' perceptions of the Alberta legislation have been discussed above and will not

be reviewed here. However, the relationship with Alberta Education through its regional offices of education and the perceived influence of the consultative role on the principal's success warrant examination.

Although Alberta Education is the regulatory and service institution responsible to the Minister of Education, it was not perceived as a bureaucratic or ominous entity by independent school principals. This may be due to three factors. In Alberta an attitude of tolerance and understanding regarding independent schools has been manifest (Bergen, 1989), and independent schools have had a responsible attitude toward the legislation governing them: "We look on it as our responsibility to meet these standards. We think it's very, very important." However, a third factor may have contributed to such a positive relationship with Alberta Education--a relationship that 100% of the respondents in the study indicated influences their leadership in a positive manner. All respondents reported a positive relationship with the local regional offices of education. They all indicated dissatisfaction with the current and planned future reduction of services and consultants from local offices and the closure to date of several offices by the current Alberta government.

Responses from all principals indicated a professional and collegial relationship with regional office consultants. Traditionally, the regional offices of education are regarded as the "eyes and ears" of the Minister of Education, and although this is an important aspect of the role, it is the consultative role of the liaison consultant that evoked a strong universal response from the principals in reference to Alberta Education. The consultants were perceived by all respondents as a direct link to information and expertise related to problems and current issues in education and as

colleagues with whom their school issues could be discussed. One comment encapsulated these perceptions:

> I feel I've operated very closely with Alberta Education, and I have found that particular relationship very positive. And I've appreciated the regional people that have come out to the school to do the evaluations that they've done. I appreciate the suggestions, and when I've had questions, they've been there to provide assistance. Over the years when the office was in existence, two or three times a year we principals met with the consultants in the office, and they kept us up-to-date with regard to changes that were coming and any assistance they could provide. It was great! I found it positive. However, our regional office is not there any more.

Another respondent noted that "my relationships with Alberta Education have been just excellent. If you are open, honest, straightforward with Alberta Education, they'll be decent to you."

Consultants were described as educational advocates who demonstrated genuine concern for the school and its students:

> Consultants provided a lot of help from the expertise they could draw on or areas the Department of Education could draw from. . . . Our liaison consultant is unbelievable. These people have had such a real input into the program. They have really taken some pride in the fact that this was one of their schools. . . . They were really proud of the fact that they could go back to their office and say, "That's one of our schools." They would come to our graduations; they would come to all our social functions. We have had an excellent rapport.

Five of the principals indicated that a trust relationship existed between them and the consultants. One noted that the trust relationship often resulted in "straight talk." For example: "They basically told us that . . . they were going to suggest we close the doors because of the low enrollments and potential financial problems. . . . It just wasn't going to be the place that they would want to be supporting."

Another respondent noted that Alberta Education's regional office consultants and the relationships with them were to him an important influence when he began as a principal. He and other respondents

recollected that beginning principals often experienced a "sort of unwritten mentorship" on the part of regional office consultants. They noted that often teachers in independent schools were appointed as principals with little or no previous experience or formal training in administration. Supervisory or vice-principals' positions often did not exist in many schools (not necessarily those in the study), and the only role model was the departing principal. Regional office consultants, who often had school-system administrative experience or who had studied administration formally, often gave novice principals information and assistance with the formal reporting requirements of Alberta Education and, when requested, informal collegial advice relative to the internal management of the school and its constituents. Several of the respondents confirmed that when a situation with which they had little or no experience arose, a call to the consultant usually resulted in sound advice. They indicated that in conversations with other principals it was often noted that, had it not been for the guidance and suggestions from regional office consultants, some situations might have reflected negatively on their leadership in the eyes of parents, students, staff, and/or trustees. This topic was summarized by one respondent in this way:

> I have always had a good relationship with Alberta Education, a very cooperative relationship, and I think that on both sides there has been a great deal of respect. I've known several of the consultants, and in every case I have been impressed by the professionalism of the personnel I have dealt with and their willingness to help us in any way that they can, given the limits of their mandate as well.

In summation, all respondents indicated a very good relationship with Alberta Education through the regional offices of education and the liaison personnel assigned to the school. Principals who had been in their positions the longest expressed the strongest views that Alberta Education

consultants had contributed to their successful leadership, through both their regulatory duties and their ongoing consultation.

Other Significant External Organizations and Individuals

Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta

The Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta (AISCA) represents the majority of independent schools in Alberta. It was founded in 1958 and is an organization "committed to defend and promote the parental right to determine the education of our children" (AISCA, 1995, p. 1.1). The organization's role "is to help create and maintain the social and political climate in which parents can carry out their educational responsibilities with the assurance that their initiatives are compatible with the legitimate concerns of their communities and Alberta society" (p. 1.1). The association provides independent schools with information regarding the opening of new schools, advice and interpretation regarding provincial legislation and regulations, contact with the media, workshops, speakers, and information through newsletters and memoranda. It also represents independent schools on educational councils and advisory boards that influence government policies and public perceptions.

The association has an Executive Director and a board elected from the membership. The principals perceived the association as providing a lobbying function, an information source, and a link to other independent schools. They reported its most important role as the lobbying role. Two respondents, whose schools were not members of AISCA, provided these assessments:

> We don't belong to AISCA, and I guess it's because we differ philosophically, and those differences are with regard to two things: The first is the certification of teachers. It is my belief

> that all teachers in the province must have certification; that's the expectation for excellence. The second reason is that AISCA is committed, or appears to be committed, to increasing government funding for independent schools in the province, and my board of governors would not support that.
>
> I felt they were certainly a genuine group in the sense of their interest in wanting their schools to flourish and providing choices for children; that concept was excellent. The religious overtones I felt were not needed for our situation, and I felt they were very strong. As I looked around I saw that a majority of schools involved were of the religious nature, and I felt that that's okay, nothing wrong with that; it just wasn't for me--and I'm talking personally here. I felt that as AISCA grew, it might have even more religious overtones, and I didn't feel that was for us, that's all. But that [Executive Director], man, that guy is a hard-working man! Oh, has he been banging on doors! And every time they do anything, it's a benefit to us.

Both of these respondents indicated that AISCA had had little influence on their success as principals.

The remaining respondents in the study were members of AISCA. One had recently been the President of AISCA, and another stated that "we have actually had members [principals] on the board." One of the member principals also perceived a religious tone to the organization: "I think, by and large, they're religious schools, and it's the religion that brings them together more than anything else." Aside from its lobbying and information service, one respondent summed up the perceptions of all the member respondents of AISCA:

> We think it's a very good organization because, I think, when you have independent schools you are not just doing everything by yourself, and therefore you need some sort of association so that you share resources and ideas.

All respondents expressed or implied a certain degree of loneliness in the position of independent school principal and that the existence of AISCA created a sense of unity and belonging: "You feel that you're not here just by yourself."

In summary, AISCA was not perceived by the respondents to have any readily identifiable influence on their leadership other than vicariously through direct information, lobbying, and provision of a degree of collegiality or camaraderie.

Other Independent School Organizations

Only three respondents indicated membership in, or attendance at, conferences sponsored by other independent school organizations. The North American Independent School Association (NAIS), the Canadian Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), the Association of Christian Schools International, and the Independent Schools Association of British Columbia were noted. These respondents indicated membership in and attendance at these organizations as a positive influence on their success:

> I fly out three times a year for their meetings, and it really is good. I mean, we can talk about things that are of grave concern to all of us and anticipate problems and issues. . . . I have tremendous respect for NAIS because of the services that it does offer. . . . They have some wonderful publications and conferences, . . . and they have personnel assigned to what they call their off-shore members. . . . We also have connections through our own CAIS, the 68 schools in the Canadian association, with schools in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the UK; and they're all represented at the annual conference.

The respondents indicated that conference attendance and membership in these organizations had resulted in curriculum improvements, strategic-planning programs, effective school programs, and other innovations being successfully implemented in their schools. Several principals identified the small size of their institution and a lack of funds as impediments to their membership in these organizations and attendance and participation at conferences. Some principals were their school's only full-time administrator, and they felt that others on staff would be unable to cope

with the multiple roles they performed if they were frequently away at workshops or conferences.

> Interviewer: So far you're fulfilling three roles: You're superintendent, you're principal, and you're secretary-treasurer.
> Respondent: Well, I haven't told you about my role as caretaker!

Additionally, the issue of trust, which will be examined in detail in Chapter 7, may also constrain participation and membership in external organizations because the respondents implied that a great deal of trust was placed on them as individuals "to run the school":

> [The school founder] set up a school and a culture the way he wanted, and so it was handed over to me. . . . It's incredible the trust they [the board] have. It's incredible, to the point that I worry about it at times, and I've brought it up to the board: Shouldn't there be somebody looking over this budget? Shouldn't somebody be looking over all these decisions? And they said, " No, you're doing a good job; just carry on."

The combination of multiple roles, a high degree of trust on the part of the board, and a lack of funds may combine to create constraints for principals in smaller independent schools influencing membership and participation in other independent school organizations.

Parent Organizations

As indicated in the literature review, the small size of independent schools results in one-to-one contact with nearly all the parents of students. Further, the school's contract with the parents creates an expectation of individual attention to all students and their parents. An interview and screening process at admission time and the cost of tuition confirm to a great extent the parents' agreement with the school's philosophy, program, and administration, resulting in a decreased emphasis on the need for parent groups advocating changes in the status quo. Parent groups and organizations, where they existed with schools in this study, were generally

perceived positively, and more as volunteer or ad hoc volunteer associations rather than as highly structured organizations with interests involving school mission, program, curriculum, or administration, as are often found in public school systems.

More than half of the respondent principals indicated that there were no formal parent organizations involved in their schools. In boarding schools or in schools whose students traveled a considerable distance each day, the fact that many parents lived far from the school precluded such organizations from being viable; however, in these situations the principals indicated that some local parents often acted as volunteers. On parent organizations, one principal noted that

> the board of governors is our parent council.

Another stated that

> my philosophy has been that if the parents have any concerns, all they have to do is come in and see me or call me.

And another confirmed that

> rather than their interfering through these various committees, we say, "Look, we will develop the curriculum. If you have concerns, come and talk to us about it. Speak to the teacher directly, or speak to the principal. But we're not going to make changes in the middle of the year. If there's a reason to change things, we'll discuss it, and we'll make changes. But your role is to understand what we are doing in school, how we're doing it."

and

> They have to do their job at home--to supervise their child's homework.

One respondent without a parent organization noted that

> you've got to sort of keep everybody at arm's length with each other [parents/teachers] and focus on the basic mission; that is, to teach the kids not to build your own little kingdoms and present your own little pet peeves. There are these kinds of people, unfortunately; they're there. There are a few, but thankfully

> there's not that many, so you can work with these kinds of people. But it's not pleasant; they sometimes don't make your life nice.

Referring to the absence of a formal parent group, another respondent stated that

> it also has to do with the fact that perhaps families and parents are too busy doing other things, that they really don't have time to come to meetings and do this and do that.

Respondents with parent organizations identified them as parent councils, advisory groups, and volunteer associations. They noted that the parent organizations operated as school and teacher supporters; for example:

> We have a volunteer association, and the president of that association sits on the board of governors. The volunteer association publishes annually a book of volunteer opportunities, so . . . parents can sign up. They'll . . . get input from the teachers, and it will be printed and will go out to every family in the spring. They'll collect the information over the holidays, and when we start back in the fall, we know we've got our volunteers in place for the specific things.

Other parent organizations assisted in a sporadic fashion: "We have Christmas parties, a spring tea, . . . and different kinds of social functions. We also have school barbecues, one in the fall and one in the spring." One respondent noted a more structured parent advisory council that met regularly: "It's one of those things where you as a principal have to be very diplomatic and tread lightly on certain topics and entertain the wishes and desires of the parents as much as possible."

Five respondents were not involved with any formal parent organizations, and in their unique environments they did not perceive such organizations to be necessary. One was cautious in his perception of the influence of a parent council on his leadership: "It's one of those things you have to be very careful with." Two saw such organizations as essential to the operation of the school, noting a positive influence on their leadership:

"The parents have a very significant role. I always have this sense of parental support."

In summary, most respondents in the study had not experienced highly structured parent organizations because of their unique situation: as a boarding school, as a school where parents resided some distance from the school, and/or because of the parents' agreement with, and adherence to, the school's philosophy. In all but one of the schools that had a parent organization, the principals perceived the volunteering as support for their administration and the school. Only one respondent was cautious about the value of his parent council.

Religious Organizations

The secular schools in the study reported no affiliation with a particular religious organization; however, Christian holidays were observed, and in one school an honorary chaplain provided his services if requested. In another, the representatives were permitted to pass out the Gideon Bible to the Grade 5 class on a voluntary-acceptance basis before or after school hours:

> Some principals have to be quite careful because they have people that are of the Muslim or Islamic faith, and they have to be very careful as to the different Christian ceremonies that they hold during the Christmas season; and, particularly, some of them have just done away with Hallowe'en altogether, because that's real trouble in some schools.

The principals from denominational schools reported relationships and contact with religious organizations and personnel ranging from quite distant and sporadic to ongoing daily contact. In all cases, the influence of the respective religious affiliation was evident and perceived by all respondents from denominational schools as having a strong personal influence on their

leadership and success. However, direct involvement with the church and its personnel varied considerably, as indicated by one respondent:

> This is a parental school; this is not a church school. So the parents happen to go to the same church, but the church council has no influence directly or indirectly in this school. That includes the ministers. Ministers come to school as visitors at odd, occasional times, but on a regular basis, no. Do we invite them here for certain kind of activities or to provide certain kinds of spiritual or religious leadership? No, we don't. We like to retain the separation between the church and the school even though we have this triangle of church, home, and school. But each has got their own private individual functions. Some of them work together in certain ways, but not in other ways.

and further:

> That doesn't mean that I don't have a relationship with the individual pastors. Yes, I do, and it's important to develop that. . . . You'll be dealing with some sensitive information. Sometimes it's things I pass on to them, sometimes it's things they pass to me--of a highly confidential nature.

Other respondents from denominational schools noted a closer affiliation and interaction with religious organizations and personnel:

> We have a priest on staff here because our roots lie in the [church] community, even though we have staff from all denominations. We do have a service here weekly which the students are free to attend of their own choice--we're a lay order of the church, so we sort of do have that on staff here. The Bishop is our visitor. . . . For instance, we take a yearly vow. We say that in front of the visitor.

Another noted that

> we have on campus a chaplain--directly involved in the spiritual program as far as our school is concerned. With . . . students that live in the dorm, we have a short evening worship service lasting anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes. . . . There are some of the assemblies, . . . where he will come in and talk.

This principal indicated that the religious program also involved an outreach program wherein students become involved in the community, serving in soup kitchens, providing health care, and conducting occasional church services. He emphasized that the religious studies program was an integral part of the program and not just a Bible class.

One school was built in conjunction with the church; therefore, church and school officials were housed in the same facility, and contact with the senior pastor and other pastoral staff was ongoing. The principal elaborated on this matter:

> I'm actually part of the pastoral staff at the church. Once a month we gather together in different ministry areas, different pastors report on what they're doing and make decisions and guide the overall direction that we're going. That's my main interaction through the church. I'm also certified as a licensed worker with the Christian Missionary Alliance, Western Canada district.

In summary, two secular and four denominational schools reported contact or affiliation with a religious organization. The denominational schools' direct contact and involvement with religious organizations ranged from occasional to daily. Some principals were members of a lay order or pastoral staff; all denominational principals were members of their respective churches. All denominational principals reported an excellent cooperative relationship with their religious organizations, which strongly enhanced their leadership.

Colleagues and Networks

All respondents noted contacts and relationships and networks with colleagues in other schools and systems. Such contacts, relationships, and networks were more collegial and far reaching for respondents in the larger independent schools. Principals' relationships with counterparts in public, separate, and other independent schools ranged from businesslike to very close, long-term relationships. None of the respondents indicated a propensity toward intentionally associating with only their independent-school counterparts:

> You get to meet other principals at these AISCA meetings. I keep in close contact with the university. . . . I used to take students over to listen to lectures if they were doing an interesting demonstration or to use lab facilities, so I kept close contacts. We know why we are keeping this network.

Another principal commented:

> We sometimes recruit [accept] kids who didn't fit . . . from other systems. . . . And then we have to deal with them [the other administrators] regarding the transcripts, the students' records, . . . that kind of relationship.

A respondent from a boarding school noted:

> I don't think we have close relationships, other than we have one school that's very similar, . . . so we have a very close relationship with it. Other boarding schools, we would probably talk to someone in one of those every two months.

Another indicated that

> I don't have a lot of contact with the public system. I know the principal of the composite high school downtown. I feel free to call him. Sometimes students will transfer between our schools; we'll talk to one another about recommendations.

In these instances the respondents perceived their contacts and local network from a purely professional basis. However, not all relationships with other school systems were positive:

> Our relationships with the public schools and Catholic schools are as different as night and day. For example, when I was exploring contracting out our industrial arts classes, one system said, "Let's sit down; let's negotiate; let's work out something." The other said, "We are not interested in you. If you want, you can go to the superintendent or the school board and force us to."

Some respondents described a strong relationship with colleagues and acquaintances in the public and separate systems as well as other independent schools:

> The support and help that I and my school have obtained from the public and the Catholic systems has been excellent.

and further that

> I have a lot of friends that are in other teaching and administrative positions in other systems. One of my best friends is a principal in the public system. Another one is a principal in the separate school system. . . . I think you've brought up a good point here. I hadn't thought of it before, but those kinds of things [contacts] have been important, trying to figure out where mainstream education is headed. . . . So I really value my interactions with other people in other situations.

The previous two quotations came from respondents who had taught for several years prior to their employment in an independent school. Those prior relationships established over their decade of service in the public system appeared to have been carried over intact into the new position and had continued to grow.

The relationships and networks established by the respondents with public, separate, and other independent schools were greater in number and quality in the larger schools in the study:

> We associate with other schools through the Association of Christian Schools International: We have a teachers' convention, so every year we gather together with that group. I'm also on the board for the Western Canada Association of Christian Schools International.

One respondent of a large school indicated that he still maintained contact with people with whom he had graduated from university: "Most of them are in prominent positions in education in either the separate or the public school board, and we . . . have always felt comfortable about calling one another and sharing ideas." He had been president of an Education Progress Club in a large urban center and confirmed that its members/ colleagues were supportive of him in the school. In reference to colleagues, he noted:

> I have a very strong relationship with my colleagues out at the west coast. In fact, they invited me to be a member of the Independent School Association of British Columbia. . . . It is really good. we can talk about issues that are of grave concern to all of us and anticipate problems and issues.

and

> My colleagues in the rest of the country, I'm very close to some of the individuals. We check out with one another by telephone. There are some that I would call if I were facing a particular issue and needed advice; we know who to go to.

All respondents commented on the regional offices of education:

> Again with other independent schools, we meet together at AISCA. In this area here I know all the principals, and if I have questions we talk. I guess this was one of the ways that the closure of the regional office hurt some. At one time in this local area here we could get together as administrators of these schools and share ideas and so on. It was a lot better.

Several of the respondents indicated a positive relationship with colleagues and acquaintances in other schools or systems. The number of relationships and the perceived quality of these relationships within a network of contacts grew relative to the size of the school, the respondent's longevity in the current position, and his previous experience in the public system. The respondents with stronger collegial relationships and networks proffered comments relative to the positive effects of such acquaintances on their leadership and success.

All respondents expressed concern over the ongoing dismantling of the provincial regional offices of education in that they perceived themselves and the consultants as part of a professional, collegial network. Those in the smaller to medium-size schools indicated more immediate concern relative to the reduction of services than did the respondents in larger schools. These responses may have resulted because the regional office consultants served to compensate for a lack of collegial relationships previously established by other respondents in the public school systems, and a lack of funds necessary to attend conferences and establish these relationships.

Summary

The majority of principals in this study expressed similar perceptions relative to the influence on their leadership of external factors such as the relevant legislation, Alberta Education, and significant other organizations and individuals. The degree of the perceived influence of these factors varied according to the principal's previous experience, his years in the present position, the size of the school, the number of years of the school's operation, and whether the school was secular or denominational or a boarding or day school.

The principals identified problems with funding, programming, and reporting, noting, however, that they saw them as ongoing problems subject to negotiation and changing political venues; they did not see them as influencing their leadership negatively except in the amount of time required to perform reporting tasks. However, one respondent stated that "more money, more time, and less accountability can cause problems as well." The principals perceived the security of the regulatory, administrative, and funding framework that the legislation provided, in conjunction with an excellent program of studies, as a positive influence on their leadership.

The principals regarded the regulatory and monitoring role of Alberta Education as necessary and helpful. All respondents believed that Alberta Education, and particularly the regional offices of education, had a positive influence on their leadership. The respondents described the regional office consultants as their link to Alberta Education and to important educational issues. They referred to the consultants as experts and trusted colleagues who assisted them on an ongoing basis. All respondents asserted a deep concern and sense of loss at the current dismantling of the regional offices, some cautioning that "our connection with Alberta Education and the

province will be far less" and that "this will be regarded as an unfortunate mistake in the future." The principals with the longest tenure in their position expressed the most dissatisfaction with the demise of the regional office and maintained strong views of the consultants' positive influence on their leadership.

The respondents held varying opinions relative to the influence of other significant external organizations on their leadership. The Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta, although highly regarded, was not felt to influence the principals' leadership. Other independent school organizations were familiar to the principals in the larger schools who had been in the position for a considerable time. They were seen as having a strong positive influence on the successful leadership of the principal primarily through providing access to innovation, current trends, research, and professional contacts. The principals in the smaller schools indicated no influence from these organizations in that their membership and attendance were limited because of time constraints and lack of funding.

Parent organizations, because of the characteristics of independent schools, were not considered to influence leadership for most of the respondents. Where these organizations existed, primarily as volunteer groups, they were felt to enhance the principals' leadership. One respondent mentioned concern over a parent council's potential to influence his leadership.

Religious organizations were not perceived to affect the leadership in secular schools; however, the presence of religious organizations in the denominational schools was seen to have a strong positive influence on the leadership and success of the respondents.

The size of the school, the length of time in the position, and previous experience influenced the number and quality of networks and relationships with colleagues. All respondents included regional office consultants in this category. Those respondents in their positions for a considerable time in larger schools and with a larger circle of colleagues reported that such contacts were "invaluable" and considered them as having a strong influence on their leadership.

In conclusion, the respondents considered that the provincial legislation and Alberta Education have provided a secure framework within which they felt comfortable and able to perform their duties. The liaison role of the regional office consultants was alleged to have a strong influence on their leadership. Other significant external organizations were perceived to influence their leadership in varying degrees. Professional organizations, religious organizations, colleagues, and networks were noted as having the greatest influence on the principals' successful leadership.

CHAPTER 6

INTERNAL FACTORS PERCEIVED TO INFLUENCE LEADERSHIP

The second major focus of the study was to examine the internal factors perceived to influence leadership; that is, those governance, administrative, and personal interactions that a principal regularly experiences within the physical confines of the school and its immediate environs. As indicated in the section on the need for the study, most of the principals noted that they generally felt ignored by researchers and on several occasions declared that they were momentarily taken aback by or had never been asked some of the questions that were presented to them. Several principals took considerable time to reflect on the questions, noting that they appreciated an opportunity to reflect upon and discuss their perceptions, which had until now been understood but not articulated.

This chapter deals with Specific Research Questions 2-8 relative to these internal factors which are perceived to influence the principal's leadership role: societies and boards, chair, financial officer, superintendent, faculty, parents, student body, size of school, school's program, and the school's culture.

Societies and Boards

Specific Research Question 2

In what ways do societies and boards influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

Independent school principals have in common with their public and separate school counterparts an ongoing mandated relationship with Alberta Education under the provincial legislation, as indicated in Chapter 5. Public

and separate school administrators relate to and interact with a number of organizations and associations that have developed to govern them and to provide advice, service, assistance, and direction. A similar situation exists within the realm of independent schools, where a number of organizations have developed; some, in the case of denominational schools, originated before the advent of independent schools. It was not the purpose of this study to examine or describe the structure of these organizations in detail, but rather to assess their perceived influence on the leadership of independent school principals in the study. However, some explanation relative to their operation is necessary.

Public and separate school boards in Alberta are governed by publicly elected boards which are responsible to the Minister of Education. In Alberta most accredited independent schools are operated by a not-for-profit society that has been incorporated under the Societies Act (1996). The society may be composed of parents, general supporters of the school, or a select group of interested promoters of the school, such as educators, business people, or a religious denomination (Duthler, 1995). Such a society may be created with a number of provisions within the bylaws. For example, membership is limited to a small group of committed supporters; the objective of the society is to provide an education that is congruent with a particular vision; and the society, if it so chooses, can enter into a contractual relationship with the founder to deliver educational services and operate the school (Duthler, 1995).

In most circumstances such schools operate through a board elected from parents or supporters who have an interest in the school and agree with the objects of the society. This board sets the philosophical, pedagogical, and/or religious mission of the school, developing appropriate

policies and operating primarily through committees (Duthler, 1995). All of the schools in the study operated within this type of governance structure. However, variances in operationalizing the relationship between society, board, and principal were considerable. For example, some of the respondents from denominational schools were members of a church-based school society that operated provincial and interprovincial organizations with affiliations to national and international organizations. Conversely, one of these denominational schools was operated through a society and a board comprised of religious laity with no direct governance connection with the church of their preference. Non-adherence to the preferred religion was not a bar to attendance in any of the denominational schools. Parental membership in the society was not a prerequisite to attendance in all of the schools in the study. The secular schools were operated through a local society with no affiliation to any other organization. Three of the denominational schools had a direct connection to their respective denominations. In one instance both school and church were located within the same facility. The respondent noted that

> we have a board of governors that operates the school and is responsible to the Elders of the church, so we act as a committee of the Elders' board, which is the signing-authority level in the church, and therefore for the school as well, because we are a part of the overall church ministry. There's one representative from the Elders' board that sits on the board of governors, so we have a liaison link.

In public school jurisdictions in Alberta, little difference exists among jurisdictions relative to the election of school boards, their mandate, and the role of administrators. Governance structures are generally very similar. However, each of the principals in the study reported a unique governance structure developed through tradition or designed by intention to serve best the needs of each independent school. All of the principals confirmed that

the positive environment created by the governance structure employed by each independent school society was important. The principals demonstrated a clear understanding of their own roles and the relationships that existed among individuals in their own organization. All appreciated the manner in which their unique administrative structure enhanced their opportunity for leadership. Although not mentioned directly by principals, this flexibility in governance permitted by legislation relative to independent schools may have enhanced the positive perceptions of the respondents to the legislation discussed in Chapter 5.

Two factors appeared to dominate the principals' perceptions of the influence of the governance structure upon their leadership and effectiveness. **Flexibility in operationalizing the governance structures** and **a bond of trust** were perceived as critical factors by the principals.

Flexibility relative to formal interpersonal relationships and adherence to structured administrative procedures and events--for example, adherence to specific role descriptions and duties and the timing of board meetings--varied considerably from school to school. However, the principals did not perceive that loose adherence to what would be considered standard operating and behavioral procedures in a public school system was detrimental to their success. Interestingly, the lack of formality did not vary directly according to the size of the school, as might be expected. The principal of a large school noted:

> The administrative structure has to have enough flexibility, and I think in that flexibility you have to establish good traditions and define roles loosely, letting those roles reflect a little bit of the individuals that happen to be in them at the time.

and further:

> I think I would have a hard time with a full-blown bureaucracy, and I think we're going to see too in time that the full-blown bureaucracy is costing the system a lot of resources, and can they really afford it?

A principal in a medium-sized school confirmed:

> My board only meets three times a year. But again, this school is unique because of the distance factor in bringing all the board members in. As far as my position is concerned, I work on a three-year contract. Every three years I have to be re-elected.

Another respondent in a small school noted:

> [Comment: Do you attend every board meeting?]
> Yes, I have to, yes. In fact, I'm the one who calls the board meetings because we have issues to be discussed. We have meetings as needed, and I've been pressuring the board to try and meet at least three times a year on a regular basis, and then as needed.

Another principal in a small school stated:

> In the public system you have the trustees and a superintendent at the board meeting, and principals may be invited in on occasion. I see myself as an integral part of the group: I sit at the table with them; I contribute to the discussion. I don't vote on things; that's understood. But I contribute, I discuss. I will even sit and argue with individual trustees, not in a difficult way. But they are looking to me for leadership, so I provide that leadership.
> [Comment: So superintendent is part of the role?]
> That's right. Sometimes you have to lead; but, on the other hand, you can't push yourself on the leader.

The somewhat informal approach to operationalizing the governance structure was not apparent in all schools in the study, nor were the loose administrative and role configurations specifically applicable to schools of any particular denomination or size. Some schools exhibited a more conventional approach, with regular scheduling of board meetings and specific duties and parameters of authority and role behavior in evidence, although not to the degree that is evidenced in public systems. However, in the public system, boards are responsible for many schools, whereas in the study, most boards were responsible for only one school.

> You have a good base of support because your administrative team is working together. And we've had good support from the board; whenever there's been a problem, they've tried to help us sort it through. And the church has been very supportive. When there have been problems that have gone from the administration to the school board and then ended up at the church doorstep, they have taken some good action to try to help the school be properly run.

Some principals expressed concern with their school's ability to maintain the highly valued informal bureaucratic structure as the school grew.

> I have very little concern with the current situation; however, the only thing I see now happening is that . . . elementary parents want to even be more involved in their kids' education than older ones. Because of that, they're now wanting audiences with the board on an ongoing basis for issues that should be dealt with by the principal. We very seldom have a parent want to go upstairs to talk to them; it's all done right here.

The principals indicated a **high degree of trust** and congruency between themselves and their board's mission as the second critical factor enhancing their leadership in a loose governance structure.

All respondents discussed the issue of trust at some length, declaring that the state of trust that existed between them and their respective boards, as well as parents, students, and staff, was a critical factor in their success.

> One is the freedom that I have to run the school, a freedom which is based on the confidence that the board has in me, number one; and, secondly, the trust that they have in me to lead with responsibility. If I didn't have that freedom and trust, I couldn't run the school; I absolutely could not. And I have been very fortunate in 13 years as a head to have enjoyed that, and that is critical to the successful operation of the school because it means that I can function in a truly professional way. I can exercise what I hope is my informed judgement. I can take risks and know that I've got the support of my board, and I *have* taken some risks. I can make changes. I can bring in innovations. And--not that I ever do this unilaterally--anything that I do that is of major importance that affects policy, that affects the school, is always part of a process that may begin here with my faculty, may begin with my administration, and that goes to the board. But all levels are involved in what is taking place. And I think too that I would

> say I enjoy that confidence and trust from the parent body, as evidenced by those results that I referred to earlier, and also by the faculty.

Additionally, the overt expression of trust by board members was of considerable importance to the respondents:

> The trust they have [in me] is incredible, to the point I worry about it at times, and I've brought it up at the board: "Shouldn't somebody be looking over all these decisions?" And they said, "No, you're doing a good job; just carry on."

The respondents mentioned that the process of rotational elections, wherein a few board members left and were replaced annually, influenced both the success of the loose bureaucracy and the trust placed in them:

> We have a three-year rotational system, so we have nine board members. Three get replaced every year, so there's a good follow-through. Once you start you don't have this problem of all of a sudden your board's different. It's much easier to handle than in the public system.

The principals agreed that the rotational system assisted in ameliorating the platforms of one-issue trustees and radical shifts in the board's character, which enhanced the trust factor and enabled them to cope with change in a rational manner.

The Societies Act (1996) allows for the creation of an organizational entity with a specific purpose. Such an organization attracts individuals who usually agree with the philosophical tenets of the society. Considerable latitude in the governance structure is also permitted, which allows for an efficiency of operation through an administrative structure unique to each society and board. The philosophical congruence of the societies, board, principals, and other constituents and unique, flexible administrative structures through which principals can lead effectively in an environment characterized by trust were identified as critical factors by all principals.

Chair

Specific Research Question 3

In what ways does the chair of the school board influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

The principals in the study reported positive relationships with the chairs of their boards: "[I] have not had the governance issues which have been endured by many of my colleagues across the country [in public schools]." One respondent's comment characterized others' perceptions of their respective chairs:

> My relationship with the chair is very good and very supportive. He leaves the running of the school to me. He is very confident in his role as the chair of the board--that the role of the board is to set policy and to raise funds and to stay out of my hair, but be there to give me advice whenever I need it.

Another noted:

> Well, I have operated under four different chairmen. I think it's very important for the principal to work closely with the chairman of the board. I can say that I've always had good relationships with maybe three out of the four chairmen. The ones that have been good chairmen have lasted a long time if they're good. I have no problem working with a good person. It's where you have short-tenured types--flash-in-the-pan, one-issue types--that's where you run into the troubles. You just have to bide your time.

The principals reported a great range in their ongoing contact with their chairs. In one situation the chair was often located out of province due to the interprovincial governance structure employed by that denomination. This principal noted relative to his contact with the chair that

> my relationship is basically to keep him updated as to what is happening in the school. He really does not become involved in the day-to-day operation. He chairs the board, and I will keep him informed as to what is happening--positives and negatives.

He indicated that he was in contact with the chair regularly, although "not as often as I would like." At the other end of the spectrum, one respondent stated that "the Chairman of the Board is my brother-in-law." Within this

wide range of interaction, the principals reported conversing with chairs from, minimally, once every two weeks to daily. Meetings, which were characterized as very informal, occurred generally once per month. In some cases, particularly in the smaller schools, both chair and principal fulfilled the role of financial officer: "He [the chair] is a chartered accountant. . . . He doesn't let me get away with anything." In some circumstances the situation was, although somewhat complex and loose from an administrative perspective, very effective, according to the principal:

> The current chairman was the principal of the school, and he was also secretary-treasurer of the board. So when he gave up his position as principal, he continued his position as secretary-treasurer, but handed the chequebook to me, so in a sense I'm the unofficial secretary-treasurer.

In other situations where no particular financial officer was identified, the chair was clearly also the financial officer: "Academically, I am in charge. Financially, I think he is in charge."

Commenting on their chairs, the respondents again referred to the trust factor: "Whatever happens here, if I need to report to him, I report to him; if I don't need to and it's in my jurisdiction, I just do it. He will definitely support me"; and overt expressions of trust: "Any time he commented on the good work I was doing, I took it for granted it was coming from the board too." One principal cited an example wherein he suspended a student immediately for carrying a BB gun in his bag. He reported the incident and informed the board of his wish, and the student was expelled--the same day. A similar procedure would normally take several weeks in another system and might result in a different outcome.

Without specifically articulating a mentor relationship with the chair, one respondent described the chair as an "educator par excellence," an individual who had been an educator for decades and was highly respected

in the province, "a man of wisdom who brought recognition and prestige to the school." One principal noted that he and the chair would sit and prognosticate on current issues and the future of the school:

> Our conversations--and I'm looking back over the years with different board chairs--have led to two very, very successful strategic-planning programs. Recently, we revisited the original strategic plan and developed another one. That was in the fall of 1994, and that's the one we're currently in, that we're currently implementing. And the board chair and I, yes, do talk about these things.

The relationship with the chair of the board was considered by all respondents to be positive at the current time. Three respondents identified difficult times in the past with some chairs but perceived any negative influence on their leadership to be negligible.

The principals suggested that a hands-on approach to school administration by chairs was changing in that they were beginning to adopt an advisory and policy-making role. None reported it as a current issue. One provided this assessment:

> I find that several boards are struggling with that. Because of their small nature, they started out with a hands-on approach, and it's difficult to let it go, but they're coming to realize that as they progress and expand, they have to back off that and stay with the other role.

No indication was given by the respondents in the study that a more positive relationship or more frequent contact with the chair occurred relative to the size of the school. It was evident that each respondent established a relationship with the chair that was, given their current circumstance, most beneficial to the school and therefore to their leadership.

As in the previous discussion on societies and boards, the principals indicated that a loose, somewhat informal administrative relationship with the chair and overt compliments suggesting a high degree of trust influenced their decision making and positive motivation. In some instances where the

chairs shared the role of financial officer or were the financial officers, the principals appreciated their ability and assistance regardless of whether occasional disagreements over specific issues arose, and felt that the chairs exerted a positive "check and balance" influence that ultimately enhanced their leadership. Several noted a collegial relationship that was evident between principals whose chairs were professionals in another field and were able to bring a fresh perspective to an issue: "I can talk with him about all kinds of things confidentially, and I know things will remain confidential. I have a good working relationship with him." All respondents perceived a positive relationship with the chair as an essential influence on their leadership.

Financial Officer

Specific Research Question 4

In what ways does the financial officer influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

As the role of the chair differed from school to school, so did the role of the financial officer. In public systems these individuals are most commonly referred to as *secretary-treasurers* and must be appointed, as stated in the School Act (1988, sec. 96a). This individual normally reports to the board through the superintendent of schools and is located in the system's central office. With the advent of universal school-based budgeting, public and separate school principals will of necessity become more involved in the school's financial affairs.

> This afternoon, for example, we have a team coming from an elementary school. Monday a group from the Principals' Academy came and toured and were given a presentation by my directors on site-based management, because we're perceived as the ultimate model, of course.

Schools in the study presented several variations to operationalizing this role. Some of the larger schools had an in-house financial officer who reported to the principal and board:

> Here the business officer is the business manager or the director of business services. We have a new business manager who started in August. Her predecessor actually began when I became the principal of the school, and he and I worked together for 12 years. He was the first person I hired.

In some schools the chair fulfilled the role of official financial officer, and the principal was the unofficial financial officer: "I'm handling all the finances. They are extremely trusting." Yet in other situations the distinction between principal and financial officer was very clear:

> My boss, the general manager, is the chairman of the board. The reason is they never gave me that kind of authority to be in charge of finances or budgeting, and I think they want to do it. If they do, I will let them.

In one instance the financial officer for the school was the Vice-President of Finance in an affiliated college:

> She is responsible for the finances for both institutions as far as the accounting and budget preparation--although with budget preparation it's done in close consultation with myself. In reality I do most of that, and then I'll go over it with her. But when it comes to the day-to-day finances, the money of the school, the buck stops with her even though I'm involved with it quite a bit.

The role of financial officer, in some instances, was occupied by several individuals, committees, and the principal:

> I am in a sense the secretary-treasurer. When papers have to be signed, sometimes the treasurer will do it, sometimes I can do it on behalf of the treasurer. We don't have a secretary-treasurer. The division of duties of a superintendent and a secretary-treasurer as executive types under a board doesn't operate in our system at all. One person on the board is appointed treasurer. He's the convenor of the finance section and is responsible for the budget, signs cheques once a month, and all the rest of that. It's a voluntary position, and I have input into that. The treasurer is convenor of the finance committee. One individual from the committee collects the money and does the banking, another pays the bills, and so on.

and

> Our chair, who is an accountant, used to be the treasurer; however, because of his knowledge of the educational system, he did not want to be the treasurer at this point. He felt he could provide more leadership as chair, but he does the books for us. I do any purchasing for the school and prepare a good portion of the school budget. Salaries I have nothing to do with, but when it comes to paper supplies, computers, etc., that all gets done through here. I prepare a budget for them, and it all gets melded together and presented to the school society every year.

Unlike the public and separate school systems, the role of financial officer was not a separate and discrete role in all independent schools in the study. In some situations the role was fulfilled by the chair, an appointed trustee with a committee, and/or the principal; and in one situation the principal was the (unofficial) financial officer. Most of the respondents perceived their unique arrangement as working very well and had no desire to change this flexible approach. The respondents noted that

> there's good communication back and forth;
>
> just about everybody knows what everybody else is doing;
>
> it seems complex, but it works very well, and I wouldn't want to change it;
>
> it provides a great system of checks and balances, and all contribute their expertise.

Whether the position of financial officer was clearly defined and implemented as in the larger schools or blended through chairs, committees, and principals, all but two respondents felt that their school's particular implementation of this role was conducive to their leadership and would not opt to change the situation. Of the respondents who would have preferred change, one indicated some doubt: "If the principal is not a good financial manager, maybe he will lose money and the board will be angry." He noted, however, that he needed a greater voice in finances to ensure an excellent educational experience for the students: "I must have it." Conversely,

another respondent felt that it might have been better for himself currently and the school in the future:

> In a sense I am handling all the finances. . . . I think it's time to appoint an official treasurer, and that's going to happen in the near future. We've got a new board member, and as soon as he knows a bit more about the workings [someone will be appointed].

Regardless of the manner in which the financial officer's position was implemented, most respondents felt comfortable with the status quo or were in the process of improving the current situation. Of these, all felt the financial role enhanced and assisted their leadership. One respondent felt that dramatic improvements in the educational environment could be made if he had more financial authority; however, he felt that the cost of such improvements might be viewed negatively by the board.

Superintendent

Specific Research Question 5

In what ways does the superintendent influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

A minority of principals in the study reported having a superintendent. Boards used the principal, individuals from the regional office, or superintendents from other jurisdictions to perform evaluation and/or certification services, as noted in Chapter 5. Principals in all schools reported directly to the board and to the superintendent if such an individual were appointed and available.

The appointed superintendents fulfilled roles designed to meet a particular need within their organizations, such as teacher evaluation and recommendations for certification, and did not participate extensively in the day-to-day operation of the school. One of the respondents indicated that

the superintendent was appointed on a province-wide basis, was responsible for all schools of that denomination, and had very little to do with the actual operation of the school.

> If I wanted to bring in one of the three appointed interprovincial superintendents [B.C., Alberta, and Saskatchewan/Manitoba] to evaluate some teachers, one would come at my invitation. The role that I have is basically an overlap between principal and superintendent.

Another principal who reported directly to the board and to the superintendent stated that

> It's a real advantage to have your own superintendent. Otherwise, superintendents from various jurisdictions that you happen to fall under . . . are the ones that will scrutinize your program, evaluate your program, to a point where they may even, in some cases in a negative way, have input into your program, or certainly a contradiction could be there. Our own superintendent has really solidified us as a jurisdiction, because he has credentials to certainly handle that position. At the same time . . . he basically lets me run the school. We chat on an ongoing basis. Once a week we have a regular meeting that lasts about two hours where we go through the school, talking about concerns, additions, what we want to do, problems, whatever. And his main role is one of the finances; then he reports to the board of directors. I don't at this point in my career want to deal with the finances. I'm certainly very aware of the finances in regards to what's needed and what we're planning to do. As you can appreciate, we can't run a program like this and be frivolous in regards to costs and spending.

In the above-mentioned school the superintendent, whose major task was teacher evaluation and certification and finances, was also one of the school founders and the individual who hired the principal. The chair of the board was also one of the two original founders of the school.

In all schools in the study the principals indicated ongoing regular contact with their chairs and boards. All sensed a duality in their roles (principal/superintendent) with respect to their relationships with their chairs and boards. Some expressed concerns; however, most saw advantages:

> The problem with one person doing all of these things in a small school is you become a jack-of-all-trades, and sometimes the danger is master of none. If I had fewer things to do in certain other areas, I might have more time, energy, to do things in other directions. You've got to be careful as a leader not to stress yourself out, not to take on more than you can handle.

Another noted:

> Having direct contact with the students, parents, and board, you can be very, very responsive and react to potential issues very quickly, but in the public system it is more difficult to make quick decisions.

One respondent whose school had recently appointed a superintendent saw a potential disadvantage to the additional designation:

> I don't want [the superintendent and board] to have to deal with an issue about something when I know full well that's my responsibility, and I give my parents that understanding. I mean, if they want to, if they're adamant about wanting to see these guys, I go, "Fine." I say, "But the first step should be right here, and if you and I can't solve the problem, then you go to those guys." And 95% of the time the problem is solved right here before they walk out that door, so it's been okay.

Relative to the duality of roles, one respondent commented that

> the governance of the school is a very participatory model, and the board operates through committees that have parent and faculty representation. There is involvement, there is communication, there is understanding. It's not as though we have autocrats responsible for different empires and not telling anyone what they're doing; that's never been the tradition in this school. It's always been an open-governance model.

Those principals who had no officially designated superintendent stated that the opportunity to interact directly with all constituents was valuable; however, it was onerous at times. Some indicated that being placed in a pivotal position of considerable authority on the basis of expertise and trust sometimes concerned them, and that, for the long-term benefit of the school, they were attempting to divest themselves slowly of certain duties. Those with designated superintendents perceived them as colleagues and professionals with specific roles to fulfill, most often in teacher certification

and finances. All respondents felt that the duality of their role with or without a designated superintendent, enabling them to interact directly with all constituents, was an asset that enhanced their ability to lead. Their pivotal position relative to the board and the faculty with no intermediates such as superintendents, assistants, and supervisors was, they concluded, advantageous to their leadership.

Faculty

Specific Research Question 6

In what ways do the faculty influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

All respondents confirmed that they had a very good relationship with their faculty. The principals identified a number of factors that they perceived to influence the relationship. These factors included a previous history with the teacher as a student or a colleague; the same or a similar faith; a process of hiring, evaluating, coaching, and socializing with the teacher; salary negotiations; a bond of trust developing over a long-term association; and adherence to a common goal. Not all principals identified all factors, nor did they identify all of them as having a positive influence. Exceptions to these generally positive factors were identified in the areas of socializing with teachers and salary negotiations.

Interestingly, several of the respondents identified teachers on staff whom they had previously taught in the same school. Half of the respondents noted that some former students were now employed as teachers.

Indications of political pressure from local parents to hire their children were nonexistent. The principals indicated a thorough understanding of

these teachers as former students, and their family backgrounds provided an excellent yardstick to predict success. No indications of principals having to dismiss teachers hired on this basis was noted.

Similarity in religious beliefs was cited as a positive factor in developing a trust between teachers and the principal:

> Once a week, for example, all the staff get together, and we have announcements and prayer time. And so when you pray with people, you get to know them in a deeper sense than without that kind of relationship. All of our staff are of the same religion, and I see it as an asset to our relationship. The spiritual aspect is important; it means you go to the same church together; you operate from the same basis. Spiritually, we're on the same wavelength.

Hiring practices ranged from the principal making the sole decision to having input from other administrators, staff, and trustees. Regardless of the hiring procedure, the long-term results appeared to be positive. The principals in the study reported having hired all or most of the staff. Some had taught in the school prior to becoming the principal:

> I was in the staff room for 10 years, my desk was in there, so they are my associates. I'd say half the teachers have been here longer than 10 years, so they are my associates. I was a teacher with them.

The smaller the school, the more often the principals had ongoing contact with their staff through evaluation and coaching or mentoring, "to give them guidance, direction, pull the whole thing together." Respondents from the larger schools reported considerable initial contact with teachers that gradually diminished after their certification: "I would only be involved with a beginning teacher in the school, a new teacher, and then after that the directors look after them. Or I might be brought in if there was a problem." However, all principals, whether in large or small schools, indicated that an open-door policy and ongoing, close contact with teachers existed:

> In regards to my relationships with teachers, I have an open-door policy. These teachers are down here four, five times a day for whatever reasons: "I've got a concern here"; "What about this?" "Can we do that?" "I'd like to talk to you about this"; I'm not happy with--" And we have maintained that ever since we had a staff of six or seven, and now I have 20 teachers here.

The process of socializing with teachers varied from very little to almost daily social contact. One principal cautioned:

> Personally, we get along too, but as a principal you've got to be careful that you keep that bit of distance. There are some teachers on staff that I visit socially on a regular basis; but most, no.

Another explained:

> Two thirds of the staff live right on the property; therefore we just do not see them from a nine-to-four position. We think this is very important, that I see them as moms, dads; the students see them as dorm masters. So that's the staff. So it really is a very close-knit staff, and that's why we live in the community: We gain great strengths from the whole rather than the individual. We have teachers who we hire from outside, who don't live on the property here. Also, they become part of that close relationship even though they're not living on the property.

and another emphasized:

> They know they're welcome to come and discuss anything any time and not wait for staff meetings.

The independent schools in the study utilized various approaches to remuneration. Most schools employed a grid approach similar to that used in the public schools:

> My predecessor did a study on merit pay, and I was left to follow up on it. The overwhelming response from the teachers was they did not want merit pay; they wanted the public school grid, and so that is what we have. My teachers are currently 7% above the public school grid [a large urban board] because the premier rolled back the salaries 5%. I did not do that to my teachers. And before that they had a 2% increase, so we are ahead for the first time.

One school was slowly moving to replace a merit pay system and to adopt the grid approach.

> I'm not as comfortable deciding who's doing the hard work, what they get on the basis of merit. People could feel, I suppose--and I'm not indicating that has happened--but I suppose some could feel that they were more favored than others. So I think that going towards a scale is a better arrangement.

Another respondent stated that the school used a combination of merit pay and comparative salary grid:

> The contracts are all individual; nobody knows what anyone else is getting. And if there's one thing we've been able to maintain, it has been the privacy of individual contracts. There's no such thing as a grid, but we try to parallel the public board's grid as much as possible; however, at the same time each teacher is looked at a little differently.

One principal explained a unique situation in which some staff received no salary:

> Negotiations take place. For instance, we will sit down as a school here and go through our broad budget. Part of that budget is salaries, which include in this case RRSPs, because the [lay order] has clarified that they do not take a regular salary; we get an allowance, we get our room and board, and we get use of the school's vehicles. But we do have an RRSP plan, we have a medical. For the people who are not members of the [lay order], we negotiate directly one-on-one with them. Our advisory board does not get involved with that, other than they see our overall budget and make sure that we are running the school in a fiscally responsible way. Generally, here, the salaries are less than the grid.

Two of the respondents in the study did not become involved in salary negotiations.

> Our salary scale is set by the North American division of our church, and the only differences would involve the cost of living for a particular area.

> I don't want to be involved in teachers' salaries. I get the ear from both sides anyway.

Those who were involved reported the process as having a positive influence relative to their relationship with and support from the staff, regardless of salary issues and the approach used, be it salary grid or individual contract or a combination of both approaches.

> It hasn't been a pressure point; it's been a very pleasant kind of experience, and it's been one of good relationship, because what the board has tried to do is take the principle that they want to do the best they can for the teachers, and the parents have supported that, and yet the teachers also understand that the parents are paying a high tuition to send their children here. And so those two groups have kind of worked together happily over the years. . . . Another thing that I think has contributed to the good relationship is that, in comparison to other independent schools, we have probably been one of the best-paid school boards, and it's common knowledge amongst the teachers. It helps them kind of say, "Hey, we'd better not complain too much because our board is really doing well for us. They have a good benefit plan for us, they've got a pension plan for us, we've got a good teaching arrangement, they're paying us as best they can. Sure, we could make 10 or 15% more somewhere else, but there are some realities of life that you have to live with."

These factors relating to long acquaintance, faith, socializing, contractual expectations, and salary, regardless of different situations and approaches to their application and implementation, were perceived by the respondents in most cases to enhance their leadership in that each factor involved the aspect of a **bond of trust** developed over an extended period, or currently developing. The aspect of trust and its importance were emphasized consistently by all respondents throughout the interviews.

Several principals categorized their teachers and the trust relationships with them on the basis of those who were on staff or were hired at the beginning of their tenure and had endured difficult times, periods of growth, important goal-related decisions, and historical episodes regarded as critical and foundational, and with whom they had an established trust relationship. Those who were hired more recently were seen as newcomers who had yet to accumulate sufficient experience and were perceived as being currently enculturated into an environment of trust. Although these chronological and perceptual divisions existed, the principals did not perceive the newcomers to be less supportive or trusting, but rather at a different stage of development than the original group. A senior principal noted:

> The other half have been here for less than five years, so the relationship with them is slightly different. They're looking for direction and how to teach and methods of discipline, and they're constantly discussing things with me. These are the younger teachers who are learning. The older teachers don't need to discuss methods of discipline and things; they're experienced in things. So there's almost two groups: one that feels quite comfortable, walk into my office, address me by my first name, and say, "Well, remember, we discussed this 10 years ago? This was the policy. Things are changing now. Why?" whereas the younger ones are more accepting of whatever you say.

Another senior principal indicated:

> The teachers on staff here can basically be divided into two: those that built with us in the first six, seven years; and those that have come on board the last three or four. And you can almost see a dividing line, because those that built still have dirt under their fingernails, and they realize what it took to get to where we are now; whereas the new ones come in, see this nice ship, and go, "I'm thankful to be on it, and let's just move on, and I've got all this energy, I want to do all the--" And the other ones are going, "I don't think you realize exactly what we went through to get to this point." Not that we've got a camp that's divided, because there's a lot of sharing, and there has to be in a school this small; but there really is a difference in what I see.
> [Comment: So there's in a sense a senior faculty with pride of ownership in this school.]
> Definitely. And with the new ones that are coming in, because they see the school in a fairly affluent setting versus the struggling years, they expect that anything is at their disposal as it would be in a large school--"Well, I want this, I want that"--and I have to keep reminding them that, "No, no, you can't. You can't have that."

The aspect of trust was particularly evidenced in the respondents' comments relative to employment contracts and salary. None of the respondents or their teachers belonged to a teachers' union. They all provided service through a direct contract with the board:

> They [the teachers] don't belong to any organization. That's the one thing about teachers working here: They're not members of the ATA; they don't have a union. And you'd be surprised, they don't even have written contracts; it's all a verbal agreement when they're hired. And as far as salaries are concerned, up till quite recently it was simply a matter of waiting till we knew exactly what our enrollment was, and only then would we announce whether there'd be an increase in salary or not.
> [Comment: That's interesting. So is it fair for me to say that, as a group of people, you work with them on a trust and professional

> basis? They're here because they want to do this job, and there's a trust relationship more so than a legal arrangement.] Absolutely. And they understand that the fees are set by the board, and once the fees are set, the size of the pie is determined. . . . They know there's no point in coming and asking for funds that are simply not there. So, yes, it's trust.

Another respondent noted:

> As far as my position is concerned, I work on a three-year contract. Every three years I have to be re-elected. . . . With the teachers, they are on a continuous contract after they fulfill their probationary period. If they're doing a good job and they want to stay here 10 or 20 years, it can happen. We have one that's in that range.

A low turnover rate among teachers was the norm for schools in the study: "We don't get a lot of turnover. I would say probably every four or five years we will have some teacher leave."

The long-term association with teachers in a trusting environment was perceived to enhance the principals' interactions with parents and students and with the delivery of the schools' programs.

Parents

Specific Research Question 7

In what ways do the parents influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

The **philosophical congruence** of parents with the independent schools' philosophy was perceived by the principals to negate to a great extent potential areas of dissatisfaction relative to mission, program, and administration. Parents, when they were available, were perceived to be valuable supporters of the school, staff, principal, and board in all schools in the study.

> Yes, I'm lucky, because the parents who have sent their children to this school tend to be parents who share the values of the school, and so there's a congruence right from day one. And so I

> always have this sense of parental support for what we do, and I think we see that in spades when it comes to volunteering within the school. We have the most comprehensive volunteering program. In the letters that I receive and the telephone calls that I have, yes, the parents share the values, we're on the same track, and they tend to communicate directly with me or with the directors if they have a concern. They'll put it in writing or they'll telephone or they'll use the channels that are open to them. And they're very supportive of things that we do within the school, activities and programs.

Parents of students in boarding schools had little to do with the schools unless specific problems arose that caused the school to contact them; otherwise their interaction was generally limited to special occasions and graduation:

> It's a little difficult when you are in a boarding school situation because you don't have all of the parents. We do have a number of parents that are on the board that runs the school, and then basically my contact with them would be triennial--every three years. I also get some input from the parents in the local area. Every six weeks we have an information letter that goes out to the parents. Over the last five years we've had a number of parents from Hong Kong and South Africa come for graduation.

Parents in day schools often served on the board, as discussed in Chapter 5. Beyond their involvement with parent organizations and boards, the principals perceived them as helpful supporters of the school:

> We've got a great group of parents, and they're very supportive of the teachers. They take encouraging the teachers seriously and showing it in tangible ways like bringing in lunches for them and doing things like that; it gives them an opportunity to tell the teachers, "We love you, appreciate you, and support you." Our parents pray for the school a lot too--they actually produce a little prayer guide that they send out to parents to pray for different aspects of the school operation every day.

Another principal indicated:

> The parents have a very significant role: at the board level as volunteers; at board committee level, also as volunteers; and they work in different projects in and around the school itself. We have a Volunteer Association, and the president of that association sits on the board of governors. The Volunteer Association publishes annually a book of volunteer opportunities so parents can sign up. They'll start work on that right now and get input from the teachers, and it will be printed and will go out

> to every family in the spring. They'll collate the information over the holidays, and when we start back in the fall, we know that we've got our volunteers in place for the specific things. For example, the directors and I put in for a research assistant--a parent who could help us if we want some specific research done--and we often need parents as judges for different contests. And they help: They give talks to the kids; they open their businesses when we have our careers program for our Grade 11s. Ah! They're absolutely phenomenal. I can't speak more highly about how our parents help us in so many ways.

Some respondents confirmed an overt emphasis on maintaining ongoing contact and participation with parents in the students' programs:

> Last year we made 1,700 phone calls to parents in the school. And it may be just calls to say, "I just want to touch base and let you know everything is going fine." When Mom and Dad walk in this building, we'd better know who they are, and we'd better know about their kid, and we'd better know how their kid is doing.

Other respondents maintained a more casual liaison with parents:

> Yes, they may have a cup of coffee or whatever. We have Christmas parties, a school barbecue, and different kinds of functions. We invite the parents to come, and we have a casual talk. Those kinds of occasions provide very good opportunities for interaction with the parents and volunteer involvement. Parents who pick up their kids often come to the office for a chat or to see the teacher.

Another noted that

> this is a parental school. We would like parental involvement in a lot of things; however, as teachers they don't like having parents coming and telling them what to do or parents lording it over teachers. You've [as principal] got to keep everybody at arm's length with each other and focus on the basic mission: to teach the kids. I find that our parents do an awful lot of volunteering; however, I think there are more volunteers in the public system. I'd like to see more volunteers, but not of the interfering type.

Several principals expressed concern that families were often under considerable stress because of single-parent status or both parents working. They noted that parents who had specific skills or knowledge were often unable to volunteer their time:

> Parents are too busy doing other things, so they really don't have time to get into the schools. I see that too [both parents working], especially when your kids go to a school where you have to pay tuition.

One principal indicated:

> Volunteers are very limited. If the parent is a single mother or father, they are busy working, and it's hard to do everything.

Another respondent explained that parent volunteers were of critical importance to the school. Only academic subjects are taught, and the school day ends for primary students at 1:00 p.m. and for the remainder of the day the parents are responsible for all extracurricular programs.

> They're back in the parents' laps, and they decide whether the afternoon is for music, karate, lying in bed, or going on picnics, whatever; it's up to the parents to decide. We say, "We will help you as much as we can. If there's a notice to send out, we'll do it. If there's money to collect, because it's easier for the school to do it, we'll do it. But you find the teachers, and you arrange for the programs." So, yes, there are programs outside the school, especially for the little ones, that the parents are involved in, and they do a good job. They do a better job than we would do because we know how to teach physics, chemistry, mathematics, history, geography; we don't know how to run a skiing club. For parents it comes naturally; especially the ones who volunteer have done it, have done it for my other child, have done it for this school, and they come here and they run it.

Parental involvement in each of the schools in the study varied from minimal to considerable. Regardless, the principals perceived their participation as valuable.

Students

Specific Research Question 8

In what ways does the student body influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

Relationships with students varied according to the size of the school. The respondents in both smaller and larger schools reported wishing to

spend more time with students. Those in smaller schools in some instances indicated that "we have around 200 kids, and I know everybody and they know me."

Those respondents in small schools fulfilled numerous roles and as a result came to know the students well.

> I work here as a principal, a counsellor, and a teacher. I've seen them grow from little kids that I've taught to teachers coming back and working in the system. They can actually come and talk to me--sometimes to discuss some 'terrible injustice' a teacher has perpetrated on them.

In the larger schools the principals noted that "it gets increasingly difficult to know everyone, but I try as hard as I can."

The respondents stressed the importance of visibility in the school, participation in events, and knowing as many students as possible:

> I try to interact with them as much as I can. One thing I do now, because I'm stuck here in the office so much of the time managing things on an administrative level, is that I try to find things to do, like coach a team every once in a while. Every once in a while I teach a class. Not all the time; right now I'm not teaching a class. I formed a club, the Outdoor Club, so I take students on hiking trips, I take them horseback riding, skiing. I try to get out to all the games that the students play athletically, I try to go to all their band concerts, and I try to mingle with them in the hallways as much as I can. I do supervision at the elementary level at noon just to have a little bit of fun with the kids.

Another indicated:

> It's easier for me to know the senior students because I seem to be more involved with them than I am with the elementary, although I read with one of the elementary classes every day. They have a reading program, and I go and read with the elementary. And I visit the elementary and speak with them. I go on some of the student trips. For example, the first week of the Spring Break I'll be away with the Grade 11s on their eastern-universities tour. We fly down to Toronto and get on a bus, and we visit 12 universities in seven days and wind up in Montreal and then fly back. I've been on trips to China and Russia with different groups. I go on skiing trips with the kids. I go to as many of the games as I can, in their sports. If they have track meets, I go to those. I run with them when we do Terry Fox every fall.

> [Comment: The only way to describe it is *high profile.*]
> Very, very much so, yes. And it's interesting; I think some still think it's not high enough, but you are stretched in so many directions in this job. But I do try to go to as many of the student activities as I possibly can. And when I can't, that's delegated. One of my directors will go for me.

All respondents were confident in their ability to be firm and exert their authority when necessary. They were perceived as the ultimate authority. One respondent confirmed:

> I'm an upbeat person with kids. But there are times when it's tough and when there are decisions to be made that they don't like.

Another recalled:

> I said, "Sorry I have to suspend you," and I reported it to the board, indicating we cannot have these kinds of students, and we expelled him within the day.

And another suggested:

> Up until now I've been teaching Grade 7. It's a mixed role [teacher and principal], and I think that's good. I think you have to have some sort of, not really a trust, but knowledge that there is an ultimate authority. And it's best for the children never to find out; it's best they never end up in the principal's office, because it's better the unknown. So very few children are actually ever sent here, and discipline is handled at the classroom level.

The respondents indicated that their school's size, mission, program, and staff operating in an environment characterized by trust and respect resulted in positive relationships with their students.

Size of the School

Specific Research Question 9

In what ways does the size of the school influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

The size of the school clearly influenced the principals' leadership. Those in smaller schools looked forward to growth, and the respondents in

larger schools contemplated the potential ramifications of further growth. The perception of more students as a key to better funding, facilities, and programs was evident with all respondents. However, unlike the public system, these principals were bound by more stringent parameters relative to funding, hiring additional staff, pupil-teacher ratios, and expected adherence to the school's philosophy. Some of the smaller schools were concerned with recruiting or advertising for students on an ongoing basis: "I started to recruit students locally. By 1991 it was 35 local kids, and then we got around 120 international students. The recruitments have grown dramatically to 200 students." Conversely, the larger schools contemplated the viability of expansion:

> I think there are some elements we need to address, given the change in demographics and also the enrollment pressure. And our vision of increasing the enrollment in certain sections of the school I think needs to be reconsidered in the light of what's happening, particularly now that we're getting pressure from alumni who want to send their children to the school, and that's a real pressure on available places.

and further:

> A strategic plan in 1979 determined that the school would be comprised of 27 classes of 20 each and that our maximum would be 540 and that we would take our time to grow into that. We didn't grow into that until sort of the early years when I became principal, so let's say the mid-1980s we reached the 540. Your growth comment is important to us now, because in order to maintain the school without double-digit fee increases, we have to spread the burden of the fees, and the only way to do that was to increase the enrollment. And that's why the last strategic plan calls for a maximum of 660. **But we will not change the teacher-student ratio of 1 to 11,** so the hiring will still keep pace with that.

Generally for the respondents in this study, the larger schools had more administrative and support staff, better facilities, and instructional materials; and offered a more diverse program, all of which were perceived to enhance

their leadership context. However, two respondents noted their concern in maintaining a close relationship with students as the school population grew.

Program

Specific Research Question 10

In what ways does the school's program influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

As reported in Chapter 5, the principals indicated their overall satisfaction with the legislation, Alberta Education, and the Alberta Program of Studies. Their flexibility allowed the development of programs which would enhance the achievement of each school's particular mission. All respondents indicated academic achievement as fundamental to their mission. One concluded:

> Once we got to a point where we had graduates in the school who had achieved a PhD in English, in history, in geography, physics, math, and medicine, and they've gone [on to practice their professions], we [began to feel that] our program was adequate.

Another commented:

> Maybe I overemphasize the academic part. I think that the students should have as the first priority outstanding academic performance, but I'm also flexible. The fact is that some students cannot get there. I have to think of some way at least to make them a success in terms of a vocational or other kind of career.

The respondents in denominational schools indicated few problems in integrating the academic and religious components of the program:

> We not only teach our Bible doctrines or teachings, we also insert units on world religions, so we try to balance it out. And I really don't have any problems with the provincial program. I would say generally the majority of our students are at the university entrance program, and for these students it's a pretty structured program.

Several respondents indicated that concomitant with the emphasis on academic achievement or academic achievement and religion, there were other important aspects of their program which identified the school, such as an emphasis on athletics, on outdoor education, and on academic upgrading for university or college entrance. In some schools the program emphasis had created their respective cultures replete with their own unique traditions, ceremonies, and symbols.

Culture

Specific Research Question 11

In what ways does the school culture influence the role of the principal in an independent school?

The respondents in the study reacted differently to questions regarding culture, tradition, and symbolism. Some found it difficult to identify the culture of their school immediately, noting that they "felt" a culture but had never actually been asked to discuss or articulate their school culture. Given time to reflect on school culture, one respondent indicated the worthwhileness of the task and concluded that a better perception of his school had resulted from the exercise: "It is what we are and to an extent where I've taken us, and I'm starting to see other things that we might do."

A number of cultural elements were common to all schools in the study; however, each respondent placed different emphasis on various cultural aspects. Considerable variance and uniqueness existed within the school cultures, but it was not within the scope of this study to examine in detail the culture of each school. Some respondents felt that some of their schools' culture had been carried from out-of-province founding schools and from other schools within the province, some felt that the culture had

developed haphazardly as the school grew, and others noted that the culture had to an extent been consciously designed from the school's inception.

A number of cultural elements were common to all schools in the study. Some of the most identified included respect, trust, religion (even in some secular schools), duty, mutual support, self-discipline, family, social skills, personal confidence, safety and comfort, giving something back, looking after those younger, academic achievement, competition, special programs, recognition, ethnicity, multiculturalism, long-term relationships, and a sense of continuity. The respondents in each school identified several or more of these elements as important in their school's culture. Emphasis upon and evidence of these cultural elements varied relative to each school and the principal's perception of them. However, all respondents emphasized certain components of their school's cultures that they regarded as foundational. Those were respect, academic achievement, religion (in some schools), discipline, and tradition. Other aspects such as those indicated previously and numerous others were perceived to flow from these foundational elements of respect, academic achievement, religion, discipline, and tradition.

> [Comment: *School culture* has been referred to by writers as school climate, atmosphere, personality, feel, tone, and character. It encompasses things such as relationships among students, teachers, support staff, and parents, and is often described as "the way things are done around here." How would you define your school's culture?]
> I've got two reactions to that. The first is, visitors always tell me that when they come into the school they detect an air--it's usually an air or an atmosphere--of cheerful purposefulness, and I take that as a compliment. What they mean is, they see the kids happily going about their learning or their activities, whatever is going on, and they also detect this amongst the staff, total staff, when they come to the school. . . . And it's perceived that way because I think the key word in our culture is *respect.* I think it's something that we have worked hard at over the years. . . . It

> comes down from undoubtedly the example that I set and ask my staff to set, and that is, everyone in this building has to be treated with respect, regardless of anything else about them.

In another school,

> when a staff member enters a room, the students stand up. We explain this is not some sort of ego trip for the teacher but a sign to be silent, that a teacher has entered the room and we're going to proceed with other things. They refer to teachers as Sir and Ma'am. People see an inner strength in a person that is polite and respectful.

The respondents identified respect as influencing the entire institution and all those involved, not only the students:

> The only serious conflicts I've ever had with parents--they're fewer than five--have been over issues where a parent has not shown respect for a member of my staff and has been verbally abusive. In over a decade only three cases; I've been lucky. In those cases I had to point out, "That's not the way we speak to people around here." You have to let some people know what you're about. You can never let up on the respect issue.

The principals stressed the concept of **respect**, noting that it encompassed and related to many other cultural areas; for example, social skills, mutual support, safety, and comfort. One respondent's comments illustrated the views of the other principals:

> It is a tradition in most independent schools that we are not here just for ourselves only, we are here for others, and we can make a great difference in the quality of life by how we choose to use our skills.

and

> All the Grade 11s, the 66 of them, recently had these placements in their Endeavors program in businesses and so on; they all wrote thank you notes. It's part of their program, it's part of the expectations, and I regard that as the right, socially acceptable behavior. And if they're going out, as my predecessor used to say, "We're raising leaders at this school," which is a bit of an exaggeration, but even so, they will be perhaps in positions where knowing that the *savoir faire* aspect is really important. It's the street sense, it's the street smarts, it's the *savoir faire:* Here's what I do in this situation. And part of that is, it's never inappropriate to send a thank you note to someone who does something for you.

and further:

> The older ones really look after the younger ones, and we have programs in different subject areas where the older students are directly interacting with the younger ones and building their confidence and skills.

Academic achievement was identified by all respondents in the study as a critical aspect of their culture. All stated that student perceptions of academic achievement were influenced by the overall school culture and that new students quickly identified with their peers' and teachers' attitudes. One principal's comment was confirmed by all the respondents:

> [Comment: So in this school too I think you suggested that it's not good to have just average marks, and competition and working hard for your grades in a subject is admired by your peers.]
> Yes, and at the same time it's not a negative competition; it's not that cutthroat [for example] "I'm out to really beat you in any way, shape, or form that I can." It's a very positive competitiveness. . . . After the kids have been here a couple of months [the parents] will come in for interviews and they'll say, "Ah, we can't believe how so-and-so has been turned around. All of a sudden it's good to be bright."

The respondents maintained that the intense academic challenges provided by the school negated many discipline problems.

Religion was identified as a fundamental aspect of the denominational schools in the study and was also perceived in a derivative sense as an important factor in the secular schools. A principal from one of the denominational schools affirmed:

> We have tried to develop a culture here that could be described as warm and based on our religious philosophy of life and how a school should be run in a similar fashion, so what we try to exemplify to our students is a basic message of love and care; and yet, on the other hand, there are standards and consequences to our behavior that we will deal with if need be. So we try to have a balance of love, mercy, and truth.

Another respondent from a denominational school confirmed:

> When it comes to the philosophy of the teachers in this school and the philosophy that the board wants passed on, we're not here as administrators or teachers; we're not here only to educate the kids as far as academics are concerned. We're also here to share with the kids our own personal relationship with Christ. As a result of the religious relationship, the majority of teachers take a personal interest in the kids. Students feel they can talk to teachers or myself openly, honestly, and confidentially. I have seen students and teachers crying together over a particular problem or praying together. I guess if you want to sum it up, we like to promote an atmosphere that we have here as family.

Another stressed:

> Devotion assemblies are important because we talk about not only religious philosophy, we talk about the spiritual kind of growth which helps the students' behavior and conduct.

The secular schools were not devoid of religion, and honored religious holidays and used religious concepts in their philosophy and daily practices.

> As much as we have no religious affiliation, we really do have a very strong religious philosophy, particularly in the sense of respect for one another. The idea of "Honor thy father and thy mother," "Do unto others, . . ." and brotherly love are here in this school, no doubt about it.

Another indicated:

> We have a devotion every month. We use the local church, and a local priest offers a very general presentation so it won't be offensive to anybody who is not a religious person and is there just for knowledge on a voluntary basis.

The principals commented at length upon other aspects of their schools' culture, noting that perceptions of independent schools involving strict discipline are often exaggerated and that discipline is more often managed through the school's culture via respect, academic endeavors, and religion. Several respondents agreed:

> I don't have to exercise discipline. It's there automatically.

> When they have their uniforms on, for example, they're like a business person going to work. They're dressed for the occasion, so there's a control there when they're in these uniforms.

Others indicated that the contractual relationship with parents also assisted in some areas of discipline: "We have a zero tolerance policy towards drugs."

As noted previously, school cultures were described by principals as having developed along different paths. Two respondents mentioned that the culture in their schools had been originally influenced by principals, staff, and/or students who had come from another province to create a new school or had been involved in other similar schools in the province; however, their schools, over a period of years, developed their own culture. The respondents in schools of fairly recent origin indicated that they often had no initial notion of what the culture was or should be:

> It was a culture of chaos, and it was just a matter of establishing who was in charge, that's all that had to be done, and then to make sure that the kids understood that I was fair. So when I walked into the school and saw all the things that were going on and the running in the hall, the kids slamming each other around and doing this and doing that and no respect for teachers and the use of vulgarity and so on and so on, that had to be controlled. Once it was controlled, then we could slowly, slowly start to expand the culture with no real direction; there was no real vision there to say, "This is what we would like to see later on." And so with no real thought about it, as I say, any real direction to what you wanted to see later on, it just kind of transpired; it just kind of unfolded.

Some respondents indicated that the school culture was positively influenced at the inception of the school by the founders:

> This is a business, and I use that term a lot to my teachers. I don't use it to the families, but I certainly use it to the teachers. It's a business, and it's a very successful business, and we want it to continue to be successful. And in being successful we have to cater to our clients, and our clients are our parents and our kids in this school, and I want the business to grow. And yet I want you in this business, as a teacher, to feel real good about wanting to stay in the business. We'll do that by giving you a better workload, different compensation here or there, whether it be financially or other ways, and we're all going to work towards that, because the happier I am, the happier I want you to be. You can't really say that in another school, because you work hard for your boss and three years later your boss transfers to another

> school. Now there's a mass exodus in the school or a lot of disgruntled teachers because the boss left. So you talk about feeling comfortable around here; there's solidarity as well.

One respondent explained that the school had been founded by a group of landed-immigrant business people who foresaw impending and continued political strife in their homeland for relatives and friends. Students were recruited to participate in a "Canadian" school. Over a period of years local students and students from other countries began to attend the school, and the school's current culture reflects an international, multicultural, Canadian student body.

The cultural elements of tradition, ceremony, and symbolism were evident in all schools. Some were similar to British, European, Australian, and American independent schools in their attention to tradition, ceremony, and symbolism as essential aspects of school life.

Traditions, Ceremonies, and Symbolism

The range of responses from the principals relative to the influence of tradition, ceremony, and symbolism was similar to that regarding school culture; that is, some perceived them as ongoing, routine aspects of the school operation that were helpful to relieve routine and enhance communication, but they were not perceived and emphasized as integral to the school's culture and well-being as much as they were in other schools. The larger and older institutions exhibited greater evidence of and reliance upon tradition.

Most respondents identified routine annual traditions and ceremonies found in most public schools, such as regular assemblies; concerts and activities for traditional holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter; sports and academic teams; mascots and trophies; parent barbecues;

ski trips; and numerous other traditions, ceremonies, and symbols. However, the respondents' experience with, and perceptions of, the influence of traditions on the school culture and on their leadership varied considerably. The principals described different experiences with tradition:

> Now, with [the founder] there were none--N-O-N-E; absolutely nothing. There wasn't a ceremony when the Grade 12s graduated, nothing. There was a student assembly simply because the Lord's Prayer was said. They came, said the Lord's Prayer, and went away. There were no mascots. He just kept that close to zero because he felt that all those things detracted from the main focus, which was teaching. And the walls were bare. The children would come in and not look at the walls; they'd look at their books. So he went to one extreme. You know how the pendulum swings from one end to the other, and if you want things one way, you really have to swing it to one end. It was my job to start introducing these things. So as a school mascot we got a great big stuffed teddy bear. It was meant to be raffled off to raise money. Well, somehow the teddy bear got a [school] tie, a [school] sweater, and he became the [school] bear, and he actually got enrolled in Grade 1. He had a chair, and he got to the point where he had some books and people would write homework for him to do, and this became so interesting that he became the mascot.

> So gradually as classes graduated we said, "Well, we should do something for them. Let's take them out for dinner." We started an open house at the end of the year where we started giving out some awards. So it's still very, very low key in terms of those traditions and things, but we now have an assembly where we say the Lord's Prayer, and if you don't want to say it, that's fine. We sing the national anthem, and we sing it in English and in French on alternate weeks.
> All we do is, the last day before the Christmas holidays we have an hour of carol singing where all the children come out--yes, that would be a tradition--they come out and the parents and grandparents are invited. And it's being questioned more and more: "Do we need to be singing Christmas carols?"

In some schools traditions were developing: "Last month we won the volleyball; the staff are champions. I'm the most valuable player in volleyball."

The respondents from denominational schools commented on the traditions of setting aside devotional time on a regular basis:

> We start our day with devotional time: reading from the Bible, praying together, and maybe some singing starts the day. Everyone meets in their homeroom situation. Initially, the teachers meet and have half an hour together, and then the students come. It keeps me close to my religious roots and keeps you always trying to renew your commitment.

Another explained:

> Devotions are an ongoing tradition. With our weekend services, Friday evening we have vespers, to which our dormitory students are required to come, and we encourage attendance from the village students. We also have a worship service on Saturday and a Sabbath school. With our assemblies we generally do one or two religious assemblies a month with the campus chaplain or guest speakers. One thing that the board expects is that my personal lifestyle and beliefs are going to be in harmony with the teachings of the church, and that's important. If that's not there, you can't pass that on to your students, so it has to be there.

Several respondents confirmed and emphasized the critical role of tradition in their particular institution. They identified a number of school traditions that were elaborate, valued, and highly anticipated by all members of the school community. The respondents indicated that each tradition, ceremony, ritual, or symbol enhanced a particular aspect of the school's philosophy and culture. Ongoing important traditions that were identified included alumni reunions, special awards for significant families in a school's history (for meritorious service or contributions to the school), fund-raising activities such as a Terry Fox Run, an annual triathlon for the Handicapped Olympics (which includes parents and staff), and a staff choir that sings in seniors' homes and malls. These principals cited numerous special awards days relative to good citizenship, athletics, and academics. School uniforms were regarded as part of the school's tradition. The principals maintained that the uniforms enhanced a sense of belonging and served to identify students as being part of the school, as well as contributing to discipline and reducing comparisons of affluence. Dress codes for teachers were also identified as important.

A number of special ceremonies were identified as especially significant by the respondents. One confirmed:

> I would say the biggest event that we have is our graduation, which is a three-day event. It starts Friday night with what we call *class night,* and that's a program the students put on. On Saturday morning there is a baccalaureate service, which is a church service; and in the evening we do a vesper program for parents and students. And on Sunday we have commencement and a high-profile speaker. It's very, very elaborate. We look forward to it; a major event.

Another declared:

> Our graduation for junior high is similar to other junior high graduations, but our Grade 12 is state of the art: the pageantry, the formality of it. The guest speakers we have are unbelievable. We want students to remember their graduation to be proud of the school and all the things they've accomplished here.

One principal explained the significance of ceremony and the perils of interference, and illustrated its importance in the human experience through a brief reverie:

> Graduation is traditionally held at [an exclusive historical hotel], and the graduating class always has its photograph taken on the grand staircase under the arch. This relates back to the original headmaster from England who took up residence in the hotel and started interviewing the first students who joined the school. Our most important tradition here that's just full of symbolism is our prize giving in June. It's held outdoors on a beautiful summer morning, usually the third Saturday in June at 10:30, and all the parents and all the kids are there; they're all dressed up. The graduating class goes in in procession, and I wear my gown and mortarboard, and we have a distinguished speaker. And all the silverware is up there and all the books, all the prizes, and everyone is celebrated. Teachers are presented with gifts celebrating years of service; retirements are honored, all at the same time. I mean, our prize giving is a community celebration, and it's teachers and staff, and it's kids and the graduating class, and the valedictorian speaks. The only thing that can change it from being outside is the weather, so if it rains we have to have it in the big gym, and nobody likes it when it's in the big gym because it's uncomfortable and it's humid and all of that. But now we've got this theater which seats 617.
> One of the Grade 12 teachers was telling me last night at parent-teacher interviews that he had mentioned to the graduating class that prize giving this year would be in the theater, and he was practically lynched. He was surprised, and I said, "Don't you realize the significance of this tradition? Everyone knows: It's

> outdoors unless the weather stops it." And I said, "I would interfere with that tradition at great peril because the community expects it, and it's the talk of the community, and everyone dresses up and looks their best, and it's a real celebration." . . . And I can still see Grant MacEwan standing there, talking at prize giving, and the kids floating down the river in their inner tubes and calling out "Hi!" and this, that, and the other. And Grant MacEwan made some funny comment; it was really wonderful. But, yes, it's gone on even before, well before I was associated with the school.

Some respondents confirmed their belief that ceremonies and symbols were essential to the well-being of the school culture and the students: "For us they're absolutely vital, and they surround us." This respondent explained:

> Historically, a voyageur would reach a height of land, and he would then start to be into the waters that would go to the Arctic, to the Pacific if he crossed over the mountains, and he would stop there; all the *voyageurs* would stop there and have a ceremony. They would get into the water, the new *voyageurs,* the ones who weren't Men of the North, and they would have to repeat three promises. . . . All of our new boys have the same experience. They sit in front of the oldest voyageur, and the other voyageurs gather around; and as they say their promises, they have spruce bows and [the older voyageurs] are dipping them into the ice-cold, clear water and anointing the boy. Of course it's a little hard for him to say his promises as he does that. Then he comes out of the water and is greeted by his fellow voyageurs. In some ways that tradition is for us the passage of boy into manhood. He becomes a Man of the North.
>
> I believe that without those kinds of traditions, without those gut-wrenching ones that brought people to battle, to songs, to the bagpipes, you need those kinds of things to bring people to do the things that they do not believe they can. And when you build those things into the traditions of your school, they will remain sound.
>
> We don't have just a student council; we have an operating parliament with a leader of the opposition and a prime minister. We have a sergeant-at-arms come and knock on the doors with the mace and be denied entry, and then eventually when they have elected their speaker, in comes the school mace. I read the throne speech at the opening of parliament, because as headmaster I also stand for the Lieutenant Governor or the Governor General.
>
> I also give the speech at the end of the year to our graduates, which is another tradition signifying another step in their lives: They are leaving their boarding school, we have armed them, and we will miss them.

The range of traditions, ceremonies, rituals, and symbols identified by the principals varied considerably. One respondent summarized the opinion of most respondents relative to traditions, ceremonies, rituals, and symbolism:

> Look, this is one of the most important features of an independent school, and one of the features, I think, which contributes significantly to the success. I think ceremony is an extremely important part of people's lives, and I think it's unfortunate that there has been a move away from ceremony and a move away into things that are laid back, that are casual, because I think deep down we all cry out for ritual. That's very important. Ritual is important in death; that's why we have a funeral. It's important in celebration; that's why we have marriages and significant birthdays, all of those sorts of things. But in a school it's vitally important.

Some principals perceived tradition to be an important although routine aspect of the school culture; however, most perceived it as critical to the school culture and the school community, integrating tradition, ceremony, and symbolism as important aspects of the school program.

Summary

The respondents indicated a considerable degree of satisfaction from being asked to participate in the study in that they felt that they were often ignored by researchers and others in education. This perceived lack of interest may have resulted in comments indicating that the principals had not previously been asked to respond to a cluster of questions relative to internal factors that are perceived to affect leadership. Most respondents indicated that the interview process had served to "tie together" perceptions of their environment and provided a helpful structure to examine their individual school cultures.

Questions more specifically oriented to governance included the respondents' perceptions of societies and boards, the chair, the financial officer, and the superintendent.

Societies and Boards

As a result of the School Act (1988) and the Societies Act (1996), a considerable degree of freedom is permitted relative to the governance structures and administrative roles in independent schools. This was clearly evidenced by the schools in the study, because societies and boards operated each school with a unique structure developed to enhance their mission. Such flexibility in operationalizing the governance structures and a bond of trust between the trustees and principals were perceived as critical factors in the operation of the schools. Each school with its individualized management structure and role descriptions was perceived by the principals as enhancing their opportunity to provide leadership. Some minor constraints were noted; however, they were in a process of being removed. A process of rotational elections wherein a few board members were replaced on an annual basis was noted as advantageous relative to potential radical shifts in the board's character after an election. The principals indicated that the key elements relative to the success of their enterprise were flexibility in operationalizing the governance structure and a bond of trust that existed among the participants. These elements of flexibility and trust were frequently mentioned in response to questions relative to the administration and constituents of the schools.

Chair

The principals in the study reported positive relationships with the chairs of their boards, with little evidence of tension. Regular contact with the chair varied considerably according to the governance structure that the board had adopted. Cooperation and a sharing of expertise and consultation were the most commonly mentioned interactions between chair and principal. The issue and the importance of trust were identified by all respondents.

Financial Officer

Again, schools in the study presented variations to operationalizing this role ranging from a discrete permanent position to the chair fulfilling two roles. In some schools a committee fulfilled the role; and in one case the principal was the unofficial financial officer. Most respondents reported satisfaction with their unique situation.

Superintendent

Unlike public school systems, the independent schools in the system did not all employ a superintendent. In most cases the principal, individuals from the regional offices of education, or superintendents from other jurisdictions fulfilled the duties of superintendent. Superintendents did not participate actively in the day-to-day activities of the school and generally provided for the particular needs of the schools in areas such as finances, teacher evaluation, and recommendations for certification. Those respondents with superintendents, whether they had offices considerable distances away from the school and were seen infrequently or were housed in the same facility, perceived them as colleagues and confidants. All

respondents felt that their ability to interact directly with the board and all school constituents was an important factor in their success, whether they themselves or another individual fulfilled the superintendent's role.

Faculty

The respondents identified a number of specific factors that they perceived to enhance their relationship with their faculty:

- a previous history with the teacher as a student or colleague prior to hiring
- the same or a similar faith
- the process of hiring, evaluating, coaching, and socializing with the teacher
- salary negotiations
- a bond of trust developed over a long-term association
- adherence to a common goal

Parents

Philosophical congruence with the board's mission was identified as the major factor relative to the support that parents extended to the school and the principal. Parents and volunteers, when available, were perceived as valuable supporters of the school.

Students

Relationships with students varied relative to school size. All respondents noted a desire to spend more time with students. Although they were perceived as the ultimate authority figure in all schools, the principals indicated a great effort to maintain a close relationship with their

students and were diligent in their efforts, particularly in the larger schools, to maintain a high profile. The respondents identified five factors that enhanced their relationships with students:

- high visibility and contact with students
- a perception among students that the principal was the ultimate authority
- the school's adherence to mission
- a strong program
- an excellent staff

Size of the School

The size of the institution was perceived by all respondents to influence their leadership. Those respondents in smaller schools practised in a context in which further growth was desirable and therefore influenced their role. Those in larger schools were influenced by the potential ramifications of further growth. The larger schools evidenced more administrative and support staff and better facilities and instructional material, and offered a more diverse program. The number of roles that the principals performed decreased as the size of the schools increased. However, regardless of size, the principals reported insufficient time to complete their leadership tasks.

Program

The principals indicated their overall satisfaction with the Alberta Program of Studies. Again, as with the flexibility permitted in the governance structures of boards and societies, the principals indicated that such flexibility in programming permitted development of programs that enhanced the school's success. In addition to academic achievement or

academic achievement and religion, the respondents noted aspects of their program for which they had established a reputation; for example, athletics, outdoor education, academic upgrading, and college entrance. The program emphasis in some schools had influenced school culture and created identifiable traditions, ceremonies, and rituals.

Culture

All respondents indicated that academic achievement was fundamental to their school's mission. In reflecting upon school culture, the principals identified a number of elements that were common in all schools in the study. These four aspects of culture were perceived as fundamental:

- academic achievement
- religion
- tradition
- discipline

Tradition

Traditions were evident in all schools, although the principals' perceptions of their value differed. Some respondents identified few traditions, whereas others, particularly those in older, longer established schools, identified numerous traditions and emphasized their importance in the school's program and culture.

Conclusion

Relative to internal factors perceived to influence leadership, the principals exhibited a high degree of satisfaction with their unique independent schools and the individuals with whom they interacted. The

positive influence of these internal factors was perceived to be a result of a flexible governance system, a bond of trust, and a culture created and cultivated by dedicated individuals with highly congruent philosophies--a relationship that one respondent described as a large, caring family.

CHAPTER 7

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS RELEVANT TO SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

Chapters 5 and 6 examined the external and internal factors perceived to influence leadership in the independent school. In Chapter 7 the focus is narrowed to examine perceptions of professional and personal characteristics and effectiveness relevant to successful leadership. This chapter addresses the following questions:

12. What are the personal and professional characteristics perceived to be necessary for success in the principal's role in an independent school?
13. What criteria are used by principals of independent schools to assess their effectiveness, and how do these principals relate their effectiveness as principal to the effectiveness of their schools?

This chapter presents (a) the principals' perceptions of professional and personal characteristics for successful leadership in the independent school, and (b) the principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of their schools.

Principals' Perceptions of Professional and Personal Characteristics

Specific Research Question 12

What are the personal and professional characteristics perceived to be necessary for success in the principal's role?

Becoming the principal. As noted in Chapter 4, the principals in this study entered the independent school environment from different backgrounds: public and separate school systems, the postsecondary system, the university, or other independent schools. Some came from

other Canadian provinces and some from other countries. Only one had spent his entire career in Alberta.

The principals in the study commented on the influence of their background and professional training as these factors related to their current situation, to perceptions of their current success, and to their future aspirations.

The respondents from denominational schools confirmed that their religious affiliation and early educational experiences had strongly influenced their decision to become involved in education and denominational schools:

> My background goes back, I suppose, to when my father was a teaching in a [religious] school in Newfoundland, where all the schools were parochial at that time. When I finished high school I attended the [religious] college in Massachusetts, and I don't know how or why I decided to get into education; it seemed like it was a natural thing to do. And after graduating I actually replaced my mother as a Grade 5 and 6 teacher. I worked in Newfoundland for about 11 years, and during that time I worked on my master's in administration. . . . When I got into it, I saw it as a challenging area. I felt it was an area I would like to get into, and I felt I could make a contribution to it.

Another respondent from a denominational school also began his career as a student:

> I guess the very first involvement is, I was a student of a boarding school in Manitoba, so it was not a foreign concept to me because of the nature of that school--it was [a denominational] school in Manitoba, where the teachers have a very clear and very close relationship with students beyond just the classroom. I then came back several times just to help out with their outdoor program, and then later came to work full time in the Manitoba school.

Other principals in denominational schools confirmed that they came to be involved in independent schools after teaching in the public school system:

> I have a degree from the University of British Columbia and taught for two years in schools in B.C. Independent schools were rare in those days. I saw an ad in a religious magazine that wanted teachers for [religious] schools. I came to Alberta for an

> interview, and I've been here ever since with the [religious] schools. That was 19 years ago. I was a junior high teacher for Grades 7, 8, and 9 for 3 years and principal for the past 16 years.

Another principal from a denominational school had spent a considerable number of years in the public system and was not involved with independent schools. His religious beliefs influenced his accepting a position in an independent school:

> The involvement that I have started when the church here decided it wanted to start an independent school. The senior pastor decided that he should form a committee of people to help organize that adventure, and he knew that I was involved in education; I was in the public school system, teacher and counsellor . . . . I'd been there for 10 years. So he asked me to sit on this committee. At first I thought I wouldn't, because I thought, well, maybe I wasn't all that interested. It seemed to really catch my attention for the first little while, and he said, "Well, just sit on it. If it doesn't work out, then you can step down later on." So through his persuasion I joined this committee, and we started looking at the whole philosophical point of what could be achieved in a Christian school; that's really what we were primarily interested in. So as we talked and met as a group, the idea started to really catch my attention philosophically that what the home and the school, with the church, could do in helping young students--children of the church or children of the community--to really understand what Christian faith was about and have a consistent point-of-view outlook. It began to really catch my attention. Having young children myself, I thought this might be an option that I could support.

A respondent from a nondenominational school also had considerable experience in the public system. Similar to the previous respondent, this individual also perceived a secure future in the public school position and made the decision to leave through personal conviction:

> I was involved in administration in the public system. The opportunity came to meet with the founder when he had first started this school. Some things he felt weren't going right in the school. He had now taken over the school after its first year. He liked my ideas and offered me a position as assistant headmaster. My only reluctancy was in regards to my ATA pension. What do you do? I had been in for 14 years. So I went to a financial advisor, and he indicated to me a couple of things I could do without major concerns, and I thought, What the heck! I'll give this a try.

One respondent described a circuitous route to his position of principal:

> When I was young, 18 years old, I started to be a teacher, and after two years I became the vice-principal of a junior high school in [an off-shore country]. . . . Later I worked for the [foreign] government for around 15 years, recruiting foreign teachers and students.
>
> I had almost finished my thesis at the University of Alberta and was contacted by the school (via some friends in the university who had contact with the school) to see if I was interested in being a part-time counsellor or assistant to the principal. I came every afternoon to help in the school. The next year the principal retired, and I was approached and asked if I were interested in becoming the principal. I knew it could be a tough job, in that I had spent the previous 15 years in postsecondary, and my thesis was related to postsecondary education; however, from my coursework I learned the practices and theories of the principalship, and I said, "Oh, I can have a try." The reason I took the job was because I liked the school's unique international features.

One of the respondents, originally from [another country], never expected to become involved in an independent school, although he had received his education in an independent school. Similarly to other respondents, this principal also spent a number of years teaching in the school and in administrative positions prior to becoming the principal:

> I guess it all goes back to the fact that I was educated in an independent school right through to Grade 12, and I don't think I ever expected that I would have a career in an independent school. But when I came to Canada in 1968 to pursue my master's degree in ed. admin., I had the opportunity to be hired by an independent school, and I was successful, I got a job at that school, and I've been there ever since.

And further:

> I think that my involvement with this particular school came about particularly because the principal at the time used psychometrics. I was particularly impressed by the fact that any school that was prepared to require 15 hours of psychological assessment as a prerequisite for employment meant business, and I certainly wasn't disappointed, because my career from then on just seemed to be one challenge after the other.

Another respondent also indicated that he had no intention of becoming a principal in an independent school, much less of being hired by one:

> It was probably more by accident than design. I got my teaching certificate and was looking for teaching positions and really didn't know all the differences between public schools, separate schools, independent schools; to me they were all schools. I was interested in teaching physics, and I saw a little ad, a piece of paper torn out from the corner of the sheet, and they wanted a physics-math teacher, junior high-senior high; call this number.
>
> . . . [The founder] was looking for a science-math teacher, and so I called him on the phone. He said to come down and have a chat with him, and he offered me a position. At that time I'd just had a call from a school outside the city; I can't even remember where it was. . . . They were offering a lot more money, and I said, "No, I think I'll stay in the city." So I just stumbled onto it without knowing much about it. Maybe that was meant to be.

This respondent explained the gradual manner in which he came to be principal:

> I taught for a number of years, and I had no desire to be in administration. I was quite happy to teach. [But it was a new school, it was growing, and I fulfilled many roles, becoming the coordinator of a lot of things.] When I was approached I was quite surprised that I was being offered a position. I didn't see myself as an administrator; I saw myself as a good teacher. The condition was that I would continue with my teaching. I didn't want to give that up. I don't know how I did it on hindsight.

Some of the respondents identified themselves as committed participants in their faith, but not all of those were principals in denominational schools. For those in denominational schools, previous affiliation with their particular denomination did appear to be an influential factor. There was no specific educational or experiential background common to the respondents from which similarities could be drawn relative to their preparation for careers as independent school principals.

However, questions about professional and personal requirements important to successful leadership, such as personal educational philosophy, leadership style, and role satisfaction, led to the identification of several commonalities among the respondents.

Philosophy. The principals in many cases noted that they had never been asked to discuss their personal educational philosophy except in the briefest of terms. This might perhaps be a result of the governance model and hiring practices of independent schools. Those, for example, who were hired as teachers and became enculturated over a period of time demonstrated their philosophy through their practice. Others who were appointed directly may have been perceived to have held and demonstrated certain important values due to successful previous experience and an overt acceptance of the school's philosophy at the time of hiring.

Some of the respondents preferred to discuss their philosophy by describing their practice:

> Well, [my philosophy] has to come from my role as a teacher, which I still think is the prime role. That's why the principal really is the principal teacher; and as I see it, if you're the headmaster, you're the head of all masters. So my role is still as a teacher, and (a) you have to know your subject. And I think it really hit home when I first walked into a class, put my name on the board, and said, "This is my name." . . . You explain to them, "You have to go to school many years to get an undergraduate degree, postgraduate degree, and so a doctor in philosophy is one who knows his subject really well." And I think you have to have [establish] respect, and I think when you walk in, . . . they will accept that you're an authority; you tell them something, they're not likely to challenge it. And it's the same with the parents. . . . And you have to develop and inculcate a work ethic, that "I have my job, which is to prepare your lessons and deliver them in the best possible way; but then *you* have a job, and your number one job is to get up in the morning and come to school. You are privileged to be here in this school. Your parents are interested enough in your education to spend extra money to send you here; the least you can do is pay attention to what your teacher is saying, take good notes, go home, and do your homework. That's your job. The rest is not important; it'll come." The problem in education is that children are not being told what their job is.

Some respondents were very concise in their comments relative to their educational philosophy. One proffered a very succinct definition:

> My personal philosophy is one of academic excellence; it's also my goal: I want to educate all the kids here and see them achieve their goals.

Another noted:

> My personal educational philosophy is that I want to touch all aspects of the boy, the student. I'm not interested in just his academic successes. I want to see him as a good worker; I want to see him as an honest fellow; I want to see him as someone who has respect for his peers, for his elders. So I guess my personal philosophy is that when a boy leaves this school, this lifestyle, he walks out confident that he's got some gifts, that he's got some strong messages on how to operate in all aspects. So it's a total education rather than just parts of it.

Some of the respondents' comments on personal philosophy focused on students; others included a broader range of considerations. Individuals in denominational schools confirmed the religious aspects of their philosophy: "[We're] here to assist students in their transcendence from one life to another."

Some principals from denominational schools also used examples of their practice to explain their philosophy:

> That's a tough question for me. I want a strong academic program. That is extremely important in my thinking, and I want kids to buy into that. I want them to come here to have the advantage of the best teachers we can find. I guess I'm an optimist. I look for the very best in students. As I look back, I see students that I've worked with, some that we've had to ask to leave here, and some that you'd say were never going to amount to anything, and a few years later I see a complete change in lifestyle, focus, and direction. So I'm the type of individual that when kids go through some of the things they do in their teen years, I don't want to write them off. I try to do everything I can, even in a discipline situation, even when I've had to ask a student to leave. I've tried to do that as kindly and compassionately as possible, because I know down the road there's the potential for that student to change and become a positive citizen.
>
> If the religious code weren't there, there really wouldn't be any reason for this school to be in existence, so my beliefs definitely affect my philosophy. As I said before, it's not only a system where you're trying to educate academically, but we look at the spiritual component, and we do try as far as our educational

> philosophy is concerned to help develop a personal relationship with Christ, and that is definitely important to my philosophy in the school's goal or mission.

Another believed that

> it's important to pass along values; in that sense I'm a traditionalist. There are values that are worth passing along, and I think, if anything, the school is proof of that. "The purpose of our [religious] school is to assist parents to instruct their children to develop their talents and to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for a life of responsible steerage into the community of Jesus Christ." That says it all. Do I have a personally articulated or written philosophy of education in a hundred words or pages or less? No.

One principal's response characterized the essence of the others' philosophies:

> I believe that every child has potential, and that potential can be developed, and outstanding teachers can develop children beyond their wildest dreams, wildest expectations; that nothing is impossible, given the skills and commitment of a teacher and the curiosity, enthusiasm, and motivation of a student, and those in degrees as, of course, the students mature. And I think developing young ones into becoming all-around good adults who will contribute whatever they have gained to the good of others; and to whom much is given, much is expected, and I firmly believe in that, because that was what was expected of me in my school, and I think that that is a significant tradition in independent schools, and it is an extremely valuable one and should never be neglected. We are not here just for ourselves only; we are here for others, and we can make a great difference in the quality of life by how we choose to use our skills.

As previously noted, the principals mentioned that they had not often been given an opportunity to discuss their philosophy with others. One respondent indicated that "this was good. It's important to talk about why you're here doing what you do. We should do this more often." Another apologized for having been sentimental during his comments, noting that "maybe I went a little too far in baring my soul here, but I get very emotional about the kids and the teachers and the school."

Leadership. It was not within the scope of this study to label each respondent's approach to leadership. However, the respondents

demonstrated characteristics and practices that are identified in the literature relative to the influence of both personality and situation upon leadership. Immegart (1988) concluded that researchers were in some agreement relative to leadership traits that "intelligence, dominance, self-confidence, and high energy/activity levels are most often maintained and commonly agreed on" (p. 261). Each of the respondents in the study exhibited these traits in varying degrees according to the unique context of their situation. For example:

Intelligence: I am a good listener, and I think I try to anticipate the problem all the time. I try to solve the problem before it happens.

Dominance: There are two things I provide the school: One is certainly the firmness, the discipline. I am a disciplinarian [to students, teachers, parents], there's no doubt about it.

Confidence: I can function in a truly professional way. I can exercise what I hope is my informed judgement. I can take risks and know I've got the support of my board, and I have taken some risks.

High energy/activity levels: I get very impatient with negativity and gloominess and sort of a lack of spiritedness, because I guess I'm on the go, and I like to be dynamic, I like dynamic people, and perhaps it drives others nuts!

The principals indicated that they were more at ease in discussing leadership than philosophy and spoke openly of their approach to leadership, although none specifically identified himself with a particular school of thought relative to leadership theory. In effect, all respondents described practice that would fall within the parameters of transformational, cultural, and symbolic leadership.

Although the respondents identified traditional managerial aspects of their leadership, such as "planning, organizing, allocating resources, supervising, and evaluating--in short, dealing with routine" (Boich et al., 1989, p. 42), they also exhibited characteristics of transformational, cultural, and symbolic leadership:

> Let me put it this way: I'm very stimulated by running a school. I find the challenge of running this place really sort of grist to the mill. And I find I have to be a good listener. I listen to my students, my faculty, the board, the alumni; and I develop ideas and share those ideas in what I would call a really participatory way. I would think most of the good ideas that have come about under my administration have not necessarily been my own; I wouldn't dare take credit for them singly. . . . All of us have felt a sense of involvement in improving the school.
>
> As far as my leadership style is concerned, I try to work on a cooperative basis with my teachers. I want teachers to be part of the decision making whenever it's possible. I find if I can get the teachers to buy into it, then it's going to work. . . . I don't like conflict, and I'll do anything I can to bring students and teachers together. I also want them to feel free to express concerns if they don't like what's happening.

Some respondents provided windows of insight into their leadership practice:

> I was interested [in a deferred-salary program] as an idea; my directors were interested in it; one or two of the faculty were interested. I took it to my board committee, the Human Resources Committee; we researched it; we came back to the faculty calling for a greater degree of interest in order to make the plan fly because it would require a significant number because of the administration costs; and I had 18 indicating interest. I said, "I'll take that back to the Human Resources Committee." We went through all the nitty-gritty, developed a motion, the board passed it. We now have a deferred-salary program. Now, I may have steered that, and perhaps that's my leadership; it's steering without being autocratic.

Others described the development of their leadership style:

> I just tore a strip out of kids, constantly, but I was fair, and I was firm. And I think that is the way to run a school. If you draw on just your [first] reaction, what you feel, you can get yourself into trouble. The one thing I've learned over the years is that I control my reactions a lot more now. I let you chat a lot more when you've got a concern or problem, and I try hard to do more listening than I ever did before and also realize as well I'm going to make some mistakes, and hopefully there are not that many. To be a good principal, I think your teachers have to know what the principal wants, because, ultimately, they are in charge.

Commenting on leadership, the respondents mentioned only infrequently aspects of power and authority, although all implied the ability to dominate when necessary. One explained:

> If I have to make a decision, I can make a decision, and I think that's important as far as a principal is concerned or in any leadership role. There are times that you cannot get consensus among people, and you have to make a decision and say, "This is the way we're going to do it."

Another confirmed:

> My leadership style is pretty laid back. But at the same time, if somebody is not doing their job, it'll be brought to their attention very quickly.

And another recalled:

> This was a teacher who would have been classified as maybe in the comfort zone, not prepared to take any risks, and who is [currently] just soaring; in fact, because of his example, has been an inspiration to others. And I was pretty tough minded about this, because there were deadlines.

One respondent concluded:

> You know, personally, I don't do discipline. I don't like it. I think I'm good at it, you know, but I don't like it.

One respondent commented on the aspects of clear communication and control:

> But we're finding that if the teachers understand at the very beginning when they start here . . . what I as the principal want, then it's a lot easier for us to kind of work towards that common goal.
>
> When I interview a teacher I say, "There are basically three things I want to see happen. Number one is discipline. If you're in a classroom, you're in control. I don't care what you're teaching, you're in control. The second thing, I want you to be able to teach your subject. . . . And the third thing I want you to do is, I want you to be involved in this school extracurricularly. And if you can do that, then you and I will work really well together." . . .
>
> My leadership style comes out in regards to everything I've done in this school. I guess if there's a concern or a criticism about my leadership style, it's always been one of control. I've felt that I have to have control of what's going on, and once I'm comfortable with the control, then I can give you your reins, I can give you your reins, I can let you do this, let you do that.

Satisfaction. The principals provided examples of and insights into their personal philosophy and leadership styles when commenting on their perceptions of role satisfaction. All of the respondents confirmed a high

degree of satisfaction in their role as principal. One was about to retire, whereas others indicated a desire to continue their career in their school. The principals responded to queries relative to their satisfaction at considerable length; however, queries about the negative aspects revealed a general difficulty in identifying such factors. Often negative factors were perceived as normal "lows" in an otherwise satisfying environment and in their opinion did not warrant a description of a "negative" factor. Most confirmations of satisfaction were related to student and staff success. The principals referred to a broad spectrum of satisfaction ranging from the very specific--"when I see 90% of our graduates get into university"--to the very general--"every aspect of it, I find it all satisfying."

The principals frequently commented that the ongoing demands of multiple roles were onerous, yet they confirmed that it was an invigorating and satisfying experience. One respondent's comment expressed the perceptions of several others:

> It is a goldfish bowl, and you are torn in lots of directions, and there are times when the pressure just is really, really phenomenal; and by the end of the year I am absolutely exhausted. I can barely speak by the end of June. That all comes from trying to keep a face on everything, and you have to; you can't let up.

and

> It is seeing the pleasure that people take in their association with the school, whether it's the kids or the staff or the parents or the board. To see that pleasure, you know that what you are doing is achieving the desired results, and I think that's really important. I can't bear to be around negative people or gloomy people. If I see positive vibes coming from all of my constituents, then that gives me the most satisfaction, that what I have done, my steering, if you like, has created this. And, yes, it's a sense of accomplishment. And underneath all of that is the satisfaction that comes from solving a lot of problems for people, whether they're students or parents.

Some found great satisfaction in both professional and personal roles:

> There are very few people who can get up in the morning and say, "I'm looking forward to going to work," and after working for--what?--22 years, I still get up in the morning and look forward to going to work. There are some problems I'd rather not deal with, but I like my role as a parent in this school; I have kids who go to this school. They come home with their homework, and it creates some problems, but I like the fact that I can keep a close eye on my children and what they're doing, what they're learning. I have some say in making changes. I like my own role as a teacher, and I like my role as guiding other teachers to do their jobs to the best of their ability, to give them the support they need. I like my role talking to parents who want to come and talk to me about education. And it gives me a chance to work with children, which is extremely rewarding. And that always comes back to, it keeps you young, keeps you honest.

One respondent commented on his position allowing him to effect change: "And if there is something that is not satisfying, you have a chance to do something about it, whereas in some jobs there's nothing you can do." He noted, conversely: "And if you can't do something about it, there's a very good reason why you can't, and you accept it, and then you're not fighting it."

Others focused on their daily experiences with the ongoing challenges of school activities:

> I'm still really into the activities of the school, and I get excited about the things that are happening on a day-to-day basis, and not just the athletics: the parent-teacher interview time, the various extracurricular things that we do around the school, the accomplishments of the students. We're constantly seeing some things happening with the kids that are really exciting. We just had a boy win the junior high Science Fair, we had a boy win the geography competition. We've got graduations coming up pretty soon; those are always really exciting times. So I'm finding that to be the thing, that always every month there's something to look forward to.

Some believed that their greatest satisfaction involved their students' and staff's success. One respondent stated:

> I think the most satisfying [experience] has to be watching a young boy come out as a young man. That is, anyone that's in the teaching field, if you have lost that, then you have lost the

> essence of who and why you were called to that. And it really is; teaching I think is a calling.
>
> I think the other thing that is satisfying is to see a joyful group--a group rather than an individual--come together and be successful because they've been able to count on each other to get the job done. I think the satisfaction of watching a staff member grab onto an idea, and you've been able to provide little bits and pieces so that his or her charge to the finish line can be successful, that you've taken away obstacles to watch that enthusiasm sort of burst through. Those are things that I think bring satisfaction.

Another noted:

> The most satisfaction that I get from my job is if I see them succeed. That is the most important thing to me. When they succeed academically, spiritually, socially, when there are positives in their lives and I feel I've had a small part in that, it gives me a great deal of satisfaction. When I see a student who has struggled and they make it, when I see the ones that maybe we as a staff worked harder to get through than they did, that also gives me a great deal of satisfaction.

The respondents identified numerous positive aspects of their role that influenced their satisfaction. One commented:

> If I've had it said once to me, I've had it said a hundred times by my friends, my spouse, other principals: "Gee, you love your job." And there are so many people that, I guess even in administration, are looking for another school because of a different position because of--I'm not; I'm not. The end of June hits, and people go, "Oh, God, I'm glad!" Well, I'm glad, but I'm glad for different reasons, and I'm not sorry to see September come again. And the thing that makes it, I think, really enjoyable is that I have a lot of people around here that are really fun to work with. There's a real camaraderie amongst a lot of the staff, and it's fun to be here.

And another explained:

> Helping people, helping the students, I think; that's why I'm here. My prime purpose is to make sure that what we're doing here is enhancing the lives of the students; that's number one, and that's the most positive aspect, when I see that that is being accomplished. When I read teachers' term reports on the kids, that's one indicator. When I see the measurement and when I see the interpretations, when I see the behavior of the kids, when I see their performances and their achievements and all of these, all these indicators, *they're* the most positive aspects as far as the kids are concerned.
>
> The teachers: The most positive aspects are where I see growth, and I'm getting that in spades. I brought in computers;

> all the teachers have computers in their offices. I mandated doing reports on computers by a certain date; I brought in a program to help type, keyboard and so on. And while it was difficult for some--in fact, for one person *extremely* difficult--it was the making of that teacher. The turnaround was like the difference between night and day, and he's now on the Internet.
>
> Seeing the board happy about the achievements in the school, seeing the alumni turn up to our reunions and talk favorably about what they hear is going on in the school or about the school publications--yes, they're all positives.

Another asserted:

> [Satisfaction comes from] being able to sit down with the kids and chitchat about who they are, what they are, where they're going--the little personal things.

The respondents in the study took considerable time and care to identify any negative aspects of their role. Several noted that they had not given the negative aspects much thought until now. Discipline problems, parent problems, negative people, and a loss of collegial and classroom contact were cited as negative factors that detracted from the respondents' satisfaction. One respondent cited the board's attitude as a negative factor.

Although discipline was not identified as a major issue by any of the respondents, dealing with it, even infrequently, was difficult:

> The negative side of it is having at times to sit down with both students and teachers sometimes and perhaps to read the riot act. Discipline hurts, but it has to be done. Students sometimes think that we as teachers enjoy . . . disciplining; . . . that's not true, . . . but you get so frustrated. . . . That happens with teachers too: Students egg them on, and they don't know which way to go. That's the thing I don't like about a school: the fact that you not only have to bring a religious turn to it, but you will simply have human beings who will see what they can do to satisfy their desires, whatever they are. I don't like to see that with teachers and students when they are working hard to lessen their ability to achieve the goals that they are setting for themselves. . . . Sometimes you just shake your head.

Parents were identified as problematic on occasion:

> I think *sometimes* a negative thing is when the parent undoes your work, in the sense that you have fought hard to make this boy understand that finishing the task is important, and they let him

> slip through, and then he goes home on a weekend, and then you'll have to almost restart again.

Dealing with negative people was also mentioned:

> That is a real discomfort for me because I think when you wake up in the morning you make a choice as to what sort of day you're going to have, and I can't understand why anyone would choose to have a bad day or choose to be unhappy or choose to be negative. The sun's shining, you've got your health, and--I know it's a fact of life and I'm not going to change that, but, yes, I get very impatient with negativity and gloominess and sort of a lack of spiritedness.

Accepting the position of principal and the resulting distance created with staff and students was a concern to the respondents, particularly those who had begun their career teaching in the school:

> The fact that it's taken me out of the classroom is definitely the most negative aspect. Some day it's going to be the reason why I'm not as effective, because once you are out of the trenches, you lose something. I try and keep my ear close to the ground and find out what's going on by talking to teachers, but I think a principal has to have one foot in the classroom, and that's why I'm planning to try and teach one grade every year. You go in there and you teach these children, and you find out the culture.
>
> I think that was one of the hardest decisions, to accept the job as associate principal, because I realized at some point I'd have to start distancing myself, where you cannot just stay as a colleague. At some point you have to let them discuss amongst themselves when I'm not around. You have to leave the room sometimes.

And another principal stated:

> I'm glad you've asked this one, because I was appointed internally, and I think that makes a big difference when you become the principal of a school. I had been the assistant head, and then when [the principal] retired I became the principal. I sort of moved from having close friendships to the platform, if you like, to the dais; and I felt that very, very much, and it was certainly nothing of my doing, but people sort of moved back, distanced, and I can understand that, but, yes, it took me quite a while to adjust. . . . You certainly can't do too much about it, except be as professional as you can.

One respondent expressed concern over the board's tendency to operate the school as a business: "You need to have long-term planning. If

we look at education as a business, it's a long-term investment, and [immediate] profitability is not the major factor to assess the success of the school."

There were few indicators in the principals' backgrounds to suggest deliberate preparation for the role of principal in an independent school; however, questions concerning personal educational philosophy, leadership, and satisfaction indicated several similar perceptions among the respondents.

Principals' Perceptions of Effectiveness

Specific Research Question 13

What criteria are used by principals to assess their effectiveness, and how do principals relate their effectiveness as principal to the effectiveness of their schools?

The principals' responses regarding professional and personal characteristics relevant to successful leadership identified attributes relative to educational philosophy, leadership style, and role satisfaction. Responses to questions regarding influencing the school culture, major influences on their effectiveness as principal, and perceived accomplishments provided criteria through which the principals assessed their effectiveness and the relationship between that effectiveness and their school's success. The respondents, in suggesting perceived achievements, often illustrated how they had influenced the culture of their schools.

Culture

The respondents' perceptions relative to their effectiveness and their influence on the effectiveness of their schools were often explained through examples of their work with the school's culture and, concomitantly, the culture's influence upon themselves. For example, several respondents who were very aware of the circular aspect of influencing the culture and, in turn, being influenced by that culture used the phenomenon as a criterion to gauge their effectiveness and that of the school:

> Yes, I am aware of the school culture, and I know I have a significant part in it. And I know that it's sort of like the pyramid, and so because I'm at the top of it I'm being watched, being observed, and if I push a foot out of that culture, it could have consequences. I guess I influence it; I obviously bring my own personality, my own character, my own priorities and values, to that culture; and there has not been anything discordant as a result of that. So I've been, again, very, very fortunate. Being aware of it, knowing that it's there, cultivating it, enhancing it in whatever way I can is part of leadership. You would ignore it at your peril. It can be one of the most effective tools for school functioning and school improvement: knowing it, recognizing it, implementing it.

Another explained:

> It fits in very nicely, because you have to hand-pick teachers, train them, make sure they understand what it is you want them to do, and then you have to trust them. Just like the board has left it to me to run the ship, you have to rely on the teachers. And then when you have a staff meeting, you have to reinforce all the things that they are doing well and discuss things that need to be changed and come up with a consensus. And when everybody agrees, you say, "Okay, now go and do it." And so I think if you are watching over their shoulders all the time, there's a problem. And you get feedback from the parents. If a teacher is using methods that don't fit in with the rest of the school, the kids will pick up on it, they will take it home, the parents will come and say, "Well, why is this being done in such-and-such class?" When you don't hear complaints, you know things are going well, because the minute something is out of line, you'll hear about it.

The respondents from more recently established independent schools described the need to influence the school culture in a very direct manner in the early days of the school's development:

> When I walked into the school and saw all the things that were going on and the running in the hall, the kids slamming each other around and doing this and doing that and no respect to teachers and the use of vulgarity and so on and so on, that had to be controlled. Once it was controlled, then we could slowly, slowly start to expand the culture.

One respondent commented on the problems of attempting to influence the culture in an international school:

> You have to be a very adaptive leader. Before, six years ago, we only had international kids. That's a different issue; we only dealt with international students. Then we got another group of students, a totally different culture. How to keep the balance? How to let them mingle? How to preserve the previous culture? And do you think these local kids will fit our culture here? Now, how to change, how to let the Caucasian kids understand this culture, and how to let them get into this culture is very hard. And how to let our international kids understand our local Canadian kids. Some Canadian students are very active in class. They want to be very creative or imaginative. But our international kids are very disciplined and structured. If they have a problem or a question, they raise their hand, they get permission first, and they follow the teacher all the time. They are teacher centered; they are book centered. So it's a very different thing. But that doesn't mean these two kinds of culture will conflict with each other all the time. The only thing is, you as a leader have to encourage the students to be creative, to be active.

This respondent cited an example of how culture influenced his role as principal:

> If you deal with the students from the Pacific Rim countries, you know those kids respect teachers, they respect seniors; they are highly disciplined kids, and it's easy for me to deal with them, because they are followers. If the international kids have a problem, if I suspend them, they may not come to me to challenge me; they just follow you, follow the suspension. But the local kids say, "Oh, no, no, I have a reason."

In one school with a long history and a well-developed culture, the principal commented: "There's no sense in my coming and changing the culture. The culture is something bigger than you." This respondent explained that in his school the culture determined to a considerable extent the manner in which the principal must lead:

> You've got to be prepared to jump right into the culture. There is no way that you can lead from the sidelines. Now, that doesn't mean that you necessarily have to be, in our case, in every classroom or every canoe, but you've got to be seen as a person that is prepared to get right in there in the activities and to be prepared to do things that you would ask others to do. That's been essential to us I think here, the reason we're still leaders, is that we are involved in all of the activities that the students do. That has become part of our culture, and anyone that's going to lead this place is going to have a tough time, I think, if they think they can do it sort of from outside. They will respect, for instance, someone who's getting along in years [a teacher] or has some difficulty with a program, not maybe competing at the top, but they want to see them involved in it, a hands-on operation.

Other respondents noted that principals must be perceptive in attempting to influence the culture:

> How do you influence? Depends on what you want. If you see there are needs within the larger framework, you originate ideas yourself. At other times you rely on others around you--your teachers, your staff--to originate ideas. . . . I think you have to have an idea of the mission, a broad vision. You have to be careful that you don't involve yourself in too many little changes. You have to [introduce] concepts here and there and work on them. Sometimes you have to influence; other times as a principal you are influenced by others and given direction by them.

The principals identified other influences from within and without the immediate school culture that they perceived to influence their effectiveness:

> I guess when I look at my effectiveness as an administrator, I guess it has to be my ability to get teachers working together. I suppose that if the teachers work together the school would still be effective, but I feel if I'm working with them . . . they may influence me . . . with something new, to try something different. There's a factor [of influence] from the board. If they want something changed, they tell me. There's no question about that. But when you have people supporting you, that makes a big difference.

All of the respondents were aware of their school's culture and the influence of the culture on their effectiveness.

Other Influences

The principals perceived their effectiveness to be influenced by many factors within their individual schools. One respondent suggested that the manner in which the staff and students perceived his performance within his role influenced his effectiveness:

> I think some of the major influences on me as a principal . . . [are] the staff that I have around me to share a vision, and they can become parts of that and then can carry it. If I don't have that supportive staff, that's an indicator that your effectiveness is gone. . . . I think . . . you're perceived, by action, by deed, by thought, to be fair, to be open. . . . I think if you do not have their respect for you as a person, you as an institution, because we're going for big things here, and if you don't have that sort of trust, which also means confidence, ability in your judgement, then I think you will be fighting rearguard action all the time. . . . I think some of the things, in your most difficult times when as a school you're faced with challenging or sad times, they phone and they come and stand behind you and back you without question.

Another respondent confirmed that his family and their religious beliefs and ongoing support over the years strongly influenced his effectiveness. The support from his wife and children initially to accept the position, their tolerance of long hours and job-related problems detracting from family time, their encouragement, and their religious life together contributed, he emphasized strongly, to his effectiveness. This respondent also noted that close ties and a deep respect for certain church elders strongly influenced his leadership. These factors were not mentioned by other respondents.

Trust and confidence from faculty and board were identified by most respondents as major influences on their effectiveness:

> Well, again, I think it's confidence and trust of the faculty, of the staff, and their cooperation. And the same applies to the board as well. I could not be effective if I didn't have that support, and they're the influences, they really are. There has to be a harmony in order to accomplish things for the kids, for the school. With disharmony you don't get far at all. . . . And harmony implies a balance--not sort of sterile status quo or something that's static; there's movement in harmony.

and

> You have to have the complete support of the board, even if you have one board member that you're clashing with. I haven't experienced that, but I would find that detracting from your work. It can be terrible. And I think having the respect of the staff, and the way you get that is by actually teaching in the system and establishing a reputation as an effective teacher so that you have the respect of the staff as a teacher, and then you know the problems, you're aware of the problems that the teachers have, so when they come to you and they talk about a problem that they're having with a child or a parent or something, you know exactly what they're talking about.

All respondents felt that the expertise of the teachers influenced the principals' success and hence the effectiveness of the school:

> I think the teachers are very cooperative, and I don't need to tell them; they have self-awareness and self-consciousness. They know my style, they know how to do their job, and they know our mission. I don't need to tell them too much.

Most respondents commented that, aside from more tangible influences such as mission statements; board direction; faculty, staff, and student input; achievement tests and diploma marks; entrance into postsecondary institutions; feedback from alumni; and the above-mentioned factors, possibly one of the strongest influences on their effectiveness was being needed:

> And as much as I try really hard to stroke the teachers and to stroke the students in regards to their accomplishments, I get a lot of strokes from the parents and from the board and from the teachers, and you get a feeling for that. So you get a feeling when you come to work that you are important around the school, and it's a good feeling.

Achievements

Interestingly, the respondents, when discussing their accomplishments, often, perhaps inadvertently, revealed insights relative to their personal philosophy and leadership style, how they influenced the culture, and influences on their effectiveness, which they previously had some difficulty

in identifying. The following comments relative to questions on achievement also reveal insights relative to personal philosophy, leadership, culture, and perceptions of effectiveness.

> I think in the years that I've been head, a major accomplishment has been some of the people that I have hired as teachers, and because I have hired them, have made a colossal impact on programs and on students and on their colleagues in school. It's a people-oriented thing, and I guess that's where I'm coming from. That to me means more than the [construction project] because these personal effects carry on through life, and I think that's the most important. I look at some of these men and women who have done phenomenal things with program and with kids and with their colleagues. That will always stand in my mind as the best, because lives have been changed for the positive.
>
> Second, I think that I have made some changes with regard to the operation of the school, the structure, the administrative structure. I had a task force, I brought in some consultants--we did that in 1988--and we rationalized what had been a very diversified, shall I say, system: There weren't accountabilities and there weren't appropriate job descriptions and so on, and I put all of that into place. It was a massive [task]. And some of it wasn't too happy, but it had to be done. And we addressed the past and got on with the future, and it has been good; it's been very, very good for the school.
>
> Third, we've addressed the needs of an aging staff; the average age of the staff is 47. And I've managed--and again, in this cooperative sense--seen programs such as early-retirement incentives and EAP, the deferred salary, half-year sabbaticals, pension-plan refinements, professional development--all these areas that have meant a great deal to me because of their effects on the staff, and it will then have an effect on the children.
>
> Fourth, the alumni. In my term as head the alumni were organized in 1984 and are becoming a very powerful influence for the good of the school. I've now begun to hold reunions in Ontario, in Toronto, and in Vancouver on an annual basis, because that's where the two pockets [of alumni] are. And I really feel that it's come of age, and that's been good for the school.

Another respondent perceived achievement through a physical expansion of the school, which led to a better program:

> The big thing, the ongoing thing is constantly looking at the entire school curriculum with the teachers and making sure we're delivering the best possible curriculum we can. In terms of concrete things, I think the school had reached a stage where we need a certain critical mass to keep the school going. We were turning people away because we didn't have the space physically, and I think it was imperative that we expand the school. There was a lot of resistance from the board; that's the one area where

> I've had a lot of resistance, was to build an addition, expand the school. The main objections were (a) where were we going to get the money? Where are we going to get the teachers? And how are we going to keep the quality control that we have now? I felt we could easily add an addition, pay for it; I would find the teachers; and if anything, we'd improve the quality. We could get into a rut; we were getting into a rut, and I said, "This will force us to reevaluate, review the whole program," and I think that's been a major step taken in the last two or three years, and it's worked out very well. We've paid for the addition, we've got the teachers, we've reviewed the curriculum, and things are better.

Some respondents identified more specific accomplishments:

> No question about it, I'm very proud of that; I think that's a major accomplishment [an outreach program]. When I first came here the academic program wasn't at the level that I wanted to see it at, and I think over the years that I've been principal here, I think we have brought about change. When I first came here the kids would make fun of the kids who got high marks and put them down for it. Now we've changed that completely. I think the students are proud of their academics.

One respondent identified his success in creating an identity for the school:

> I take a great deal of pride in that we've accomplished a separation of the programs between college and high school. As a result, we have gained a great deal more recognition as far as on campus is concerned. Our kids have a greater identity--instead of being lost in the college. To give you some examples, when I first came here the student association was combined between the college and the high school. The yearbook . . . and the newspaper were college/high school productions, and [now] each has its own, [and] the kids have more opportunities for leadership positions. When I first came here there was a men's dormitory and a ladies'. College and high school students of those genders were in those dorms. . . . We now have two dormitories, one for high school and one for college; one wing is for girls, and one wing is for boys [in each dormitory], and the opposite genders don't go anywhere near the opposite sides.
> [Comment: Do you feel you've influenced the school culture by giving it a more visible identity?]
> Yes, even amongst our constituency, when they looked at this school, they looked at the college. It took a long time for people to separate the two, but that has been done. It's amazing to listen to alumni when they come back. Now when they talk about campus, they use both.

Some respondents noted buildings and additions as achievements, and others chose not to:

> The buildings are buildings; and, sure, I had a lot of influence on the buildings, there's no doubt about that. But I also involved others, and the board went out and got the money, and in a sense the board are the builders.

One respondent was unsure of his achievements:

> I really don't know if I'm successful or not successful, but I do believe, when I took over as the principal, the recruitments have grown dramatically from 90 to 200 students, from only international students to also local students; 30%, 40% are local students. You think about why these local parents want to choose us. They know the student will benefit, . . . and the parents know us not only from advertisements, but from word of mouth.

And another declined to note his achievements: "I'm too modest, and I don't have a great memory for things of the past."

The principals gauged their effectiveness through their ability to understand the influence of the culture and the success they experienced in influencing that culture. They were able to identify a variety of influences on their leadership effectiveness and their professional and personal reactions to those influences. The respondents' perceptions of their achievements provided a measure with which to identify their and the school's effectiveness.

Summary

This chapter presented the respondents' perceptions of professional and personal characteristics relative to becoming the principal in an independent school, educational philosophy, and perceptions of leadership and role satisfaction. Further, the principals' perceptions of effectiveness were examined relative to the school culture, professional and school effectiveness, and perceptions of their achievements.

Becoming the Principal

The respondents in the study, except for the denominational independent school principals, provided little evidence of any commonalities in their background, educational preparation, or motivation that would indicate formal preparation, training, or planning to begin a career as an independent school principal. The principals in denominational schools, however, indicated that their religious beliefs strongly influenced their decision to become involved in independent denominational schools. Some of the denominational school principals had taught in public schools prior to accepting positions in their current schools, as had some of those in the secular independent schools. Other principals' entire careers had been spent in independent schools. Most principals came to their positions from other provinces and countries.

Questions relative to personal and professional characteristics served to identify a number of similarities among the respondents through their comments on personal educational philosophy, leadership style, and role satisfaction.

Philosophy

The principals' comments on their personal educational philosophy varied according to their individual operational context. However, all respondents indicated the following aspects as cornerstones of their personal educational philosophy:

- the requirement of excellence and dedication in teaching
- academic excellence
- a broad education
- contribution to society

Those in denominational schools included in addition to these factors the religious mission of their particular denomination such as

- assisting students in the transcendence from one life to another
- assisting students to develop a personal relationship with Christ

Leadership

The respondents identified typical routine managerial aspects of their individual leadership roles, which varied according to the length of time the school had operated and the enrollment. All respondents exhibited a number of leadership traits confirmed in the literature: intelligence, dominance, confidence, and high energy/activity levels. Most principals, through their successful practice and foresight, had introduced cultural change and, in varying degrees, demonstrated the characteristics of transformational, cultural, and symbolic leaders. Additionally, when discussing leadership style, the respondents consistently referred to the importance of listening, cooperation, communication, involvement of stakeholders, firmness, consistency, clarity of purpose, respect, and trust.

Satisfaction

All respondents reported a high degree of satisfaction in the role of principal. None of the principals in the study were planning to seek new positions, and one was retiring. They indicated that the multiple roles they occupied, while at times onerous, provided satisfaction through these aspects:

- opportunities to effect change quickly
- close personal contact with all constituents
- having an effect on student and staff success

- the trust of the board
- a sense of accomplishment
- new challenges

Factors that inhibited role satisfaction included

- discipline problems
- parent problems that affected students
- negative attitudes
- loss of collegial and classroom contact
- board perceptions of the school

Culture

Responses relative to their influence on the school culture, major influences on their effectiveness, and their perceived accomplishments assisted in identifying criteria employed by the principals to assess their own effectiveness and its implications for the school's effectiveness.

The respondents were aware of their school's culture. However, perceptions of the strength of, and attention to, each school's culture varied according to the school's age and size. The respondents in older schools with more established cultures and traditions paid considerable attention and exercised caution when attempting to influence a change in the culture. Some indicated that it was unwise to attempt cultural change. They were also very aware of the influence that the culture exerted on their leadership. Principals in the newer schools noted their direct efforts to influence their school culture in its formative stage, the problems involved, the caution required, and the ability of even a rudimentary culture to influence their leadership style very quickly. The respondents indicated that influencing the culture involved these functions:

- listening
- moving slowly and ensuring that all constituents were involved
- being personally perceived as part of the culture
- hiring staff who would be willing to participate in the culture

Other Influences

The principals identified a number of common factors that they perceived as major influences on their effectiveness and which they used as criteria to gauge their and the school's effectiveness:

- mission statements
- board direction
- faculty and student input
- achievement tests and diploma marks
- entrance into postsecondary institutions
- feedback from alumni and parents

They emphasized that their and the school's effectiveness were strongly influenced by these elements:

- trust and confidence among all constituents
- cooperation from the board
- an expert faculty

The principals noted that the positive school ambience created by the board's and teachers' perceptions of their performance and importance as principal was critical to their effectiveness.

Achievements

The respondents in the study identified a number of personal achievements that served as a measure of both their and the school's effectiveness. As each school was unique, so were the achievements noted. The principals identified these factors:

- physical expansion of schools, resulting in more students
- better and innovative programs and a good reputation
- creating an identity for the school
- hiring and retaining a staff of highly qualified teachers
- creating appropriate administrative structures
- establishing security for the faculty
- developing alumni organizations

Conclusion

Relative to professional and personal characteristics associated with successful leadership, the principals exhibited a strong personal philosophy, leadership skills, and a high degree of role satisfaction. They demonstrated their effectiveness through their ability to understand and influence the culture, using the success of the school as a criterion to assess their own effectiveness.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings; a discussion of their relationship to the literature research, especially the leadership framework of Bolman and Deal; and implications and recommendations for future practice and research.

Overview of the Study

Leadership in independent schools has received little attention from researchers, particularly in the Alberta context. Recent changes in provincial policy regarding school financing and an emphasis on entrepreneurism may result in increased interest in independent schools and their leadership by both the general public and those in leadership positions in public schools.

The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of Alberta independent school principals about the major factors that were perceived to influence their success in the leadership role. Principals from eight of the larger accredited, funded, independent schools in Alberta were interviewed. Open-ended questions provided data relevant to factors perceived to influence success in the principal's leadership role. These extended audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim and then content-analyzed. Perusal of school policy and related documents and school visits were also used to gain a better understanding of the schools and their administrative contexts. A search for common themes among independent schools and principals was undertaken for the total group of eight and for the two groupings (four secular and four denominational).

Findings

The principals were asked to comment on external and internal factors and on professional and personal characteristics that they perceived were related to successful leadership in independent schools.

External Factors Perceived to Influence Leadership

The respondents' perceptions of the degree of influence of external organizations and individuals varied according to their previous experience, their years in the current position, size of their school, whether the school was secular or denominational, and whether it was a boarding or day school. The principals were generally satisfied with the current legislation. Most principals indicated that they felt that the current provincial legislation and an excellent Program of Studies provided a secure framework for their practice. Problems with funding, programming, and reporting to the government were seen to be more irritating relative to time requirements than as being seriously problematic. Not all principals perceived that funding of independent schools on a basis equal to public and separate systems would be beneficial either to the school or to their leadership in that increased funding could bring greater regulation.

Alberta Education, and specifically the regional offices of education through the liaison consultants, were perceived to have a very strong influence on leadership. All of the respondents indicated a direct positive influence from the services provided by consultants, who were perceived as professional colleagues. Some respondents identified consultants as providing, when needed, a mentoring role. All expressed a sense of loss and serious doubts as to the prudence of the government in dismantling these offices.

The principals in long-established schools perceived external professional school organizations as having an important influence on their leadership through providing access to other colleagues, innovations, current trends, research, and assistance with curriculum development and student, faculty, and school evaluation. Those in smaller, more recently established schools perceived little or no influence from these organizations due to (a) constraints related to a lack of funding to attend meetings and conventions, and (b) a perceived inability to take time away from the school because of a lack of experienced staff to replace them. The Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta, although highly regarded, was not perceived to have any significant influence upon the respondents' leadership behavior.

Where parent organizations existed, they did so primarily as volunteer groups. Most principals perceived them to have a very positive influence in enhancing the principal's leadership effectiveness.

Religious organizations were identified by three respondents as having a strong, positive influence through their own personal beliefs and through the religious organization's effect upon the school's culture and traditions.

The number and quality of networks and relationships with colleagues varied with the size of the school, the length of time in the position, and previous experience. The respondents who had been in larger schools for a longer period of time placed a high value on these contacts and considered them as having a positive influence on their leadership, particularly when seeking advice on different problems or seeking current information.

Internal Factors Perceived to Influence Leadership

Factors related to internal governance such as societies and boards, the chair, the financial officer, and the superintendent evinced very positive reactions from the respondents relative to their influence on the context of their leadership and their leadership per se.

Current legislation in Alberta, the School Act (1988), and the Societies Act (1996) permit independent schools to adopt the governance structure that best suits their individual size and mission. The very nature of the term *independent school* suggests a followership that is extraordinarily committed to a particular concept or belief. Legislated flexibility relative to governance and a willingness on the part of societies, boards, educators, and constituents to enter voluntarily into a loosely structured governance model characterized by trust and respect provided the leadership context for the respondents. **Flexibility** in operationalizing the governance structure, **philosophical congruence**, and a bond of **trust** and **respect** were perceived as critical to successful leadership by the principals. The boards' high degree of trust and confidence in the respondents motivated all of the respondents. The principals confirmed that flexibility and trust--particularly overt comments made by the board relative to such trust--influenced their leadership.

The principals referred to the stability of their boards, maintaining that the manner in which board members were elected on a rotational basis assisted in ameliorating the platforms of one-issue trustees and thus radical shifts in the board's character. The respondents averred that the stability created by the rotational elections allowed for the development of trust and respect between them and the board. In their experience, they did not feel

that such a process resulted in a stagnant board, but rather a board that had a better grasp of the long-term interests of the school.

Relationships with the chair, which were influenced by the unique nature of each school's governance and administrative structure, were different in each school, ranging from businesslike to collegial. Some principals conversed with the chair on a daily basis, whereas others spoke to the chair every few weeks. In one situation the principal met with the chair only a few times a year. All respondents cited good relationships with their chairs and perceived them as partners or colleagues in a mutual endeavor. Disagreements with current and past chairs were noted; however, they were characterized as issue-specific and did not result in further political repercussions.

In public and separate school systems, conflicts between superintendents or principals and the financial officer (secretary-treasurer) are perceived by the writer to be quite common. However, no serious conflict was reported to exist within the respondents' schools. In one situation, philosophical differences were apparent, but the financial officer perceived the principal's long-term goals as being both financially and educationally sound. All principals considered that they were very capable in the area of school finances. Their participation varied considerably from purchasing supplies to being the financial architect for the school's operation. In some schools the financial officer role was performed by the chair, an appointed member of the board with a committee, and/or the principal. Larger schools employed specific individuals who were designated as accountants or business officers. In one situation the vice-president (finance) of an affiliated college served as the school's financial officer. All but two respondents felt that their schools' arrangements were effective and

enhanced their leadership. One principal would have preferred more input and participation in the school's long-range financial plan, and another felt that he had too much authority in the school's finances. In both cases progress was being made to improve the situation. Neither of the latter respondents regarded the current arrangement as a serious detriment to his leadership.

Superintendents both on-site and off-site were perceived as having little influence on the principal's leadership. A minority of respondents reported having a superintendent, and only one indicated having an on-site superintendent. The respondents regarded the superintendent as a colleague whose role in consultation, evaluation, and certification was helpful. Those with their own superintendents felt that these individuals understood the school's program and faculty better than did those from other systems. All respondents saw the ability to interact directly with their constituents as an important facet of their role that complemented their opportunity to lead. Their direct pivotal position relative to the board, faculty, students, and parents--with no intermediates such as superintendents, assistants, and supervisors--was perceived as critical to their leadership, although at times it was extremely onerous.

Most respondents stated that they had the ultimate responsibility for hiring new faculty, whether or not others had input into the process. Knowing and understanding each member of the staff on a personal and a professional basis was regarded as crucially important. As could be expected, the principals reported that this became more difficult as the school size increased. Staff turnover was the exception rather than the rule, and the principals in the study reported having hired all or most of the staff.

The principals indicated that knowledge of the teacher's background and abilities provided an excellent predictor for the success of the teacher. Several of the respondents identified teachers or staff whom they had previously taught in the same school. In denominational schools, similarity in religious beliefs was cited as a positive factor that enhanced trust in the principal and participation in the culture. As previously indicated, hiring, evaluating, coaching, mentoring, and socializing with the faculty were regarded as critical to gaining the trust of the faculty. The principals in the study evaluated, coached, and acted as mentors to all staff. As school size increased, these functions decreased to an extent, although all respondents ensured their participation in these activities with their faculty members in their beginning years in the school. The principals felt that they were very close to all faculty, particularly in denominational schools and in schools where the faculty were housed close to the campus. All respondents appeared to be extraordinarily knowledgeable relative to their faculty professionally and personally. However, all confirmed the existence of a line drawn between themselves and their staff. The respondents lamented that this had to occur, and none were able to determine whether it was a staff perception of the role or whether the role requirements dictated a limited degree of socialization.

Salary negotiations were different in each school. Arrangements ranged from room, board, and investments in lieu of salary to salary grids and personal contracts, or combinations of the latter. Some principals were excluded from participation or excluded themselves; others participated fully where negotiation occurred. The latter category of principals indicated that it was a rewarding experience that they perceived as enhancing the trust placed in them by the board and faculty.

The aspect of trust and its importance was emphasized consistently by all principals with considerable frequency throughout the interviews. They were able to identify differing levels of staff trust relative to their leadership; for example, the trust that existed with the original staff hired while the respondents were teachers or had just begun as principals, and staff hired in succeeding years and those hired within the past three years. Several principals were able to perceive differing levels and kinds of trust based on historical and chronological events that they had experienced with their faculty. They did not perceive the newer faculty to be less supportive and trusting, but rather at a different level of development than more senior faculty. The principals were acutely aware of staff perceptions of their leadership and the high degree of trust placed in them.

All principals identified academic success as a priority, but each school's path to achieving success was characterized by different mission statements and goals. The respondents advised that tradition and ceremony were used to enhance and ensure congruence with school goals.

Philosophical congruence with the board's mission was identified as the major factor that influenced the principal's relationship with parents. When students travelled considerable distances to attend school, particularly in residential settings, structured parent organizations were not the norm for these independent schools. Where parents did participate, it was more often as a volunteer group for ongoing or annual school events. They were perceived as valuable supporters. Only rare instances of problems with parents were identified. Several principals cited direct examples of parent support for their leadership, such as comments and accolades delivered personally or in school ceremonies and the results of anonymous questionnaires. Low attendance at meetings designed to elicit constructive

criticism and suggestions from parents was also noted as an indication of support.

The principals were perceived as the ultimate authority by students. Respondents maintained that the school's adherence to its mission, a strong program, and an excellent faculty created an environment that contributed to a positive relationship with students.

The size of the institution was perceived to influence the leadership of all respondents. Those in smaller schools practiced in a context where further growth was desirable, whereas those in larger schools anticipated the ramifications and advisability of further growth. Principals in both large and small schools confirmed that these situations required a great deal of time and effort on their part.

All principals indicated their overall satisfaction with the Program of Studies and with the flexibility permitted in developing their programs. The flexibility to develop programs was perceived as a critical factor. Some schools had established strong reputations for these programs, which had become part of the school culture and created identifiable traditions, ceremonies, and rituals.

Questions relative to the influence of school culture elicited a broad range of responses from the respondents. School culture and its influence were described by some respondents as being "felt" or "sensed." Others described a detailed mosaic of the school culture and its inherent traditions, ceremonies, symbols, and rituals and were able to identify their leadership position within the culture and the interrelationships between the influence of the culture on the leader and the influence of the leader on the culture. The respondents identified numerous aspects and elements that they perceived as integral to their school's culture. All principals identified certain

components of their school's culture that they regarded as foundational: respect and trust, academic achievement, religion (in denominational schools), discipline, and tradition. The respondents particularly emphasized respect and trust as a critical cultural foundation in that it influenced all other aspects of the school culture. Respect and trust were identified as important factors influencing everyone in the institution and the perception of the institution by the public. All respondents stated that a breach of respect by any school constituent received their immediate attention. The principals perceived the development of their school's culture from different perspectives: (a) The culture developed haphazardly from the school's inception to the present and was identified and altered when necessary through administrative procedure, (b) the culture was preplanned by the school founders and altered when necessary through administration, or (c) the culture developed as a result of the school's philosophy and was carefully nurtured through ongoing consensus of its members. All respondents confirmed that great care was necessary when attempting to alter or influence the established school culture.

The principals asserted that perceptions of strict discipline and disciplinary measures in independent schools are often exaggerated and that discipline is more often achieved through the cultural foundations of respect, a rigorous academic program, religion, and tradition--and, on a more tangible level, school uniforms.

The range of responses relative to the influence of tradition, ceremony, and symbolism was similar to that regarding culture. Most respondents commented that they had never been asked to articulate their perceptions of these elements and saw traditions, ceremonies, and symbols as part of the culture, which some indicated that they "sensed" or "felt." These activities

were easier to identify. Again, some perceived such activities as normal aspects of their school's culture rather than as a pattern of discrete, regular occurrences with the potential of strongly influencing the school and their leadership. Most respondents identified routine, ongoing, annual traditions and ceremonies found in most public and separate schools. These common traditions, ceremonies, and rituals, however, were not evident in all schools in the study. For example, one of the schools did not have the common tradition of a Christmas concert. It was debatable whether the recent innovation of half an hour of Christmas carol singing prior to the vacation would become a tradition. Although the respondents were able to identify certain traditions, ceremonies, and symbols similar to those of public and separate schools, most identified a number of additional school traditions that were elaborate, valued, and highly anticipated by the school community. The respondents in schools with a longer history identified a more extensive list of traditions, ceremonies, and rituals and their influence on the school and on themselves as leaders. The principals confirmed that each tradition, ceremony, ritual, or symbol enhanced a particular aspect of the school's philosophy and culture.

Professional and Personal Characteristics Relevant to Successful Leadership

The respondents provided little evidence of any commonalities in their background, educational preparation, or initial motivation that would indicate a career plan to become an independent school principal. The principals in denominational schools indicated that their religious beliefs strongly influenced their decision to become involved in independent denominational schools.

As previously indicated, even though the personal backgrounds and experiences of the respondents were noticeably different, all identified similar aspects of their personal educational philosophy that they perceived as fundamental: the requirements of excellence and dedication in teaching, academic excellence, a broad education, and a contribution to society. In addition, the denominational school principals included the particular religious mission of their denomination; for example, assisting students in "the transcendence from one life to another" or assisting students to "develop a personal relationship with Christ."

All respondents, when discussing their leadership, consistently referred to listening, cooperation, communication, involvement of stakeholders, firmness, loyalty, consistency, clarity of purpose, respect, trust, and enthusiasm. In describing their practice, the principals identified traditional managerial aspects of leadership noted by Boich et al. (1989) such as planning, organizing, allocating resources, supervising, and evaluating. However, they also exhibited characteristics of cultural and transformational leadership identified by Owens (1988) and Tichy and Urlich (1984).

All principals reported a high degree of satisfaction in their role despite the onerous task of fulfilling several roles. Factors that led to satisfaction in their position included the trust and confidence of the board, opportunities to effect change quickly, close personal contacts with all constituents, having an effect on student and faculty success, a sense of accomplishment, and new challenges. Factors that inhibited satisfaction involved discipline problems, parent problems that affected students, negative attitudes, loss of collegial and classroom contact, and board perceptions of the school (as a business).

The respondents were acutely aware of the influence of the school's culture on their leadership. Those in newer schools noted their direct efforts to manage and influence the culture in its formative stages. The respondents in well-established schools paid considerable attention to the culture and exercised caution when attempting to alter or change aspects of the culture. All understood the potential of the culture to influence their leadership very quickly. They noted that influencing the culture involved listening, moving slowly, and ensuring that all the necessary constituents were involved, being perceived personally as part of the culture, and hiring staff who were willing to accept the culture and act accordingly.

A number of factors were identified as major influences on the principal's effectiveness and ultimately on that of the school: mission statements, board direction, faculty and student input, achievement tests and diploma marks, entrance into postsecondary institutions, and feedback from alumni and parents. All respondents confirmed that both their effectiveness and the school's effectiveness were strongly influenced by the trust and confidence among all constituents, the cooperation of the board, and an expert faculty. Some noted that the perceptions of boards and teachers relative to their performance and importance as principal were important to their personal motivation and success. Family support was also noted by one respondent as influencing his success.

The respondents identified a number of factors relative to perceived personal achievements. These served as a measure of their effectiveness and that of the school. These included building programs that resulted in more students, implementing improved and innovative programs that improved the school's reputation, creating a more specific identity for the school, recruiting highly qualified teachers, developing effective

administrative structures, establishing greater financial security for the faculty, and developing strong alumni associations.

Discussion

The findings derived from this study offer insights into the factors that influence leadership in independent schools in Alberta and identify important contextual aspects in the independent school environment that have implications for future practice and research.

The term *independent* characterizes the administrative context within which principals in the study conducted their practice. These principals operated in administrative structures that were unique to their schools. Unlike public/separate school systems, an interchangeable generic role description for the principal would not suffice in the case of the respondents. No two role descriptions of the principals in the study could be exchanged; thus each respondent required the ability to adapt to an environment that was unique to their particular school. Through the study of external and internal factors that influenced leadership and the criteria for measuring success, four major themes and several subthemes became evident: (a) the influence of external organizations, particularly the regional offices of Alberta Education; (b) the influence of internal governance and administrative structures, which were loosely coupled and flexible; (c) the influence of a constituent culture based on trust and respect; and (d) the approach to leadership adopted by the respondents in their unique contexts.

Influence of External Organizations

Because of their "independence," independent schools are often isolated from contact with other schools and colleagues, regardless of their rural or urban location. In public and separate schools, principals can rely on central office services and communication with other principals about routine problems, various deputies and supervisors to provide assistance in program and curriculum issues, and system leadership from the superintendent. Principals in independent schools, however, often fulfill the role of superintendent, program expert, and conduit to research and educational innovations and current issues. The principals in the study were asked to describe their relationships with several external organizations and groups. All commented at length on the regional offices of education and the service provided through their consultants.

Provincial legislation and Alberta Education's regional offices of education provided a secure, structured regulatory framework that enabled access to a group of expert consultants who, on a collegial basis, advised on regulatory matters, administration, and program delivery. Although the respondents confirmed the assistance of other external organizations such as AISCA and various professional and curriculum associations and organizations, none were perceived as significant as were the regional offices and their consultants for maintaining a constant source of information, assistance, guidance, collegial discourse, and occasionally mentorship. Local meetings of principals organized by the regional offices provided a further basis for obtaining current information as well as communication with principals in public and separate school systems. Ongoing problems with legislated funding, programming, and reporting procedures were perceived merely as management tasks by these principals,

but the ongoing closure of the regional offices was regarded as a serious matter by all respondents.

Different avenues to obtain services and assistance currently provided by the regional offices may have to be developed. The principals in the study perceived the regional offices in a manner similar to that in which principals in a public/separate system would view the central office and deputy or assistant superintendents--as a source of information, assistance, guidance, and, when required, mentorship. The principals perceived the consultants as colleagues who could provide advice across the broad spectrum of multiple roles that they occupied and in the unique governance structure within which they operated. Regulatory aspects of the provincial governments were perceived as ongoing but necessary irritants that were part of the job. These monitoring aspects of the consultants' position were generally overshadowed by the importance of the professional collegiality between principals and consultants through which they felt a direct connection to government. This surrogate role filled by a government agency for independent schools has received no attention in the research literature.

Influence of Governance and Administration

Flexible governance and administrative roles in independent schools create a context that influences the principal's leadership. Each society and board is structured to enhance attainment of its particular objectives; thus the duties and roles of appointed or elected individuals and employees differ between systems. In some schools elected positions are sometimes amalgamated with roles traditionally filled by employees; for example, chairman and financial officer. The principal fulfills duties usually assigned

to superintendents in public/separate systems. In one of the larger, more well-established schools in this study, the principal also fulfilled the duties of the financial officer. Thus leadership comparisons between schools in the study, and presumably in all "independent" schools, present a challenge for research findings developed from public/separate schools in that, for comparative reasons, those schools present an administrative milieu that is somewhat generic. However, the research does provide valid avenues through which to examine leadership in independent schools. The purpose of the study was to examine the factors that influence leadership rather than to explicate the leadership style of each principal. Given the differences evident in the leadership requirements for each school relative to governance and the multiple roles often fulfilled by the principals, Bolman and Deal's (1993) conceptual "notion of frames" was helpful in identifying certain dimensions of leadership common to these leaders in their unique contexts (see their Table 2.1, p. 27), particularly in examining leadership characteristics in those schools where the governance, administrative structures, and role descriptions more closely matched those of public/ separate schools.

The ability of the principals to use multiple frames seems apparent in considering their longevity in the position, at least in the schools in the study. One respondent referred to his various responsibilities in the course of one day: (a) to assist the chair/secretary-treasurer to complete his report for the evening board meeting, wherein the principal would fulfill the role of accountant and principal while the chair would for relevant portions of the meeting act as financial officer; (b) to discuss his recommendation for a new course offering with a representative from Alberta Education; (c) to assist a new teacher in a difficult science presentation; and (d) to address the

student body prior to a walkathon. Bolman and Deal's (1993) conceptualization suggests that the ability to use the structural, the human resource, and the symbolic frames--and possibly the political frames (if used consistently)--would be rare in that their research indicated that leaders usually use two frames; and in a recent study only 1 in 20 consistently used four frames. The principals in the study implied that they consistently used two or three leadership frames.

Further potentially relevant insight was provided by Greenfield (1995), who cited three conditions that shape the demand environment of the school environment, the second of which indicates the "presence in the school of a highly educated, autonomous, and practically permanent workforce" (p. 62). However, his conclusion is not entirely applicable to the independent school context. The teachers in this study were not employed under the umbrella of the provincial teachers' association and were subject to short notice for unsatisfactory performance. Some did not have written contracts. Nor were teachers, as described by the principals, overtly autonomous. It was apparent that the primary concern of principals exhibited in hiring faculty was not related to a difficulty in releasing unsuitable teachers, but to their suitability for the long term as supportive "team" players rather than autonomous "experts," although expertise in subject areas was considered important. The principals sought future team players not only for ability in teaching, but also for a perceived willingness or ability to participate voluntarily in the school's culture through a long-term process of enculturation. The principals were very aware of the school's mission, its instructional requirements, and the crucial importance of a supportive, involved staff with a long-term commitment, as identified by Powell et al. (1985). Ogawa and Bossert (1995) suggested that

> leadership flows through the networks of roles that comprise organizations. The medium of leadership and the currency of leadership lie in the personal resources of people. And leadership shapes the systems that produce patterns of interaction and the meanings that other participants attach to organizational events. (p. 225)

The nature of independent schools does not lend itself to the development of reactive boards, highly structured or politicized parent groups, or a recalcitrant student body. Greenfield (1995) noted that principals operate in a demand context where regular and unpredictable threats to stability exist through board election results. The principals in the study identified surprisingly few threats to school stability. The rotational aspect of board elections precluded the spontaneous creation of so-called one-issue boards and created instead a board whose members were gradually enculturated into an environment of trust and respect. Conflicting special-interest parent groups were not identified, and angry parents were regarded as rare and were attended to immediately by the teacher and/or the principal. The student body in an independent school provided no threat to the stability of the school in that the students, through their parents, selected the school, were in turn selected by the school, and were individually regarded as "special" by the faculty (Baird, 1987; Esty, 1989; Deal, 1991; Kraushaar, 1972; Powell et al., 1985). Board stability enhanced by a rotational election process and voluntary adherence of trustees, parents, and "selected" students and faculty to the objectives of the school considerably reduced the administrative time required in the political dimension and enabled the principals to devote time to other leadership activities.

Culture

Flexibility in operationalizing governance and administrative structures, careful selection of faculty and students, and the trust and respect of their boards enabled the principals to devote valuable time to cultural and philosophical goals. Good and Brophy (1986) cited school culture, the influence of informal peer networks, finances, parents, and student discipline as possible constraints detracting from the principal's leadership. In this study none of the above factors was perceived to detract from the principal's leadership. Finances, surprisingly, were not perceived by all respondents as a critical issue relative to the school. Almost half the respondents indicated that additional finances would be helpful but that their current situation was far from untenable.

In viewing organizational leadership through the lens of institutional theory, Ogawa and Bossert (1995) noted that such theory "imbeds leadership in a cultural context" (p. 238). The culture in these independent schools was characterized most strongly by trust and respect, and it exerted a strong influence on the principals. Conversely, the respondents, for the most part, were acutely aware of their cultures, traditions, and symbols and employed them to lead their schools. The influence of cultures in these schools was bounded by the school's philosophy. A critical component of their philosophy included trust and respect, which were evidenced in all activities of the constituents. Interactions among board members, faculty, students, and parents, regardless of whether the school's philosophy emphasized academics and/or religion, occurred within their framework of trust and respect, which was enhanced by their philosophical congruence.

In examining leadership as a cultural phenomenon, Ogawa and Bossert (1995) noted that researchers have acknowledged that "organizations have

or are cultures and that cultures produce patterned behaviors and interactions" (p. 237). They also suggested that leadership involves shaping organizations' cultures and influencing meanings that members attach to organizational events. These principals implied their understanding of culture as a leadership tool. They used tradition, ceremonies, rituals, and symbolism to enhance higher order leadership activities through transformational leadership, as described by Tichy and Urlich (1984), to develop a vision, to mobilize the organization, and to attempt to institutionalize long-term changes. The principals particularly sought to understand the needs and motivations of staff and students to engage them in the culture (Burns, 1978). Fostering a belief in the culture and a sense of belonging and loyalty was important to the respondents and permeated their interactions with all constituents, from dealing with financial issues with trustees to hiring and mentoring activities with faculty to leading and participating in fund-raising activities with students. Tangible, recurring activities such as traditional ceremonies, rituals, and symbols were used to perpetuate and to acknowledge formally the culture.

Deal (1991) confirmed that organizational goals in independent schools are accomplished through symbolic management and are held together by traditional practices. Bolman and Deal in a 1992 study found that administrators in that study were more likely to recognize and articulate structural issues than they were symbolic issues. All principals in this small sample also demonstrated a facility to recognize and articulate structural issues. However, over half the respondents were able to articulate symbolic issues and actively fostered and participated in ceremonies, rituals, and symbolic events.

Leadership

The discussion on leadership in this section is organized around the typology presented by Bolman and Deal (1992). In their research on cognitive orientations of principals, the researchers presented two hypotheses: (a) that the capacity to reframe circumstances, issues, and problems is a critical factor relative to success as both a manager and a leader; and (b) that leadership is contextual. They found that most principals used only one or two of the four frames (see their Table 2.1, p. 27) and that context was an important determinant of which frames were most prominently used. In their study the researchers were careful to identify the contextual and cultural factors that influenced their samples in the U.S. and Singapore. For example, principals in both countries were expected to provide instructional leadership in a multicultural/multilingual context, and both samples were currently exploring school-based management. There were also considerable differences institutionally. American principals practiced in a district within a state, whereas principals in Singapore practiced in a national school system with a national curriculum and examinations. Further, Bolman and Deal noted the traditional Chinese cultural respect for authority and education. In this study of Alberta independent school principals, the context within which they practiced was influenced by those factors previously discussed: (a) the legislation and the regional offices of education; (b) the unique structures and roles of their governance, administrative, and constituent organizations; and (c) cultures characterized by trust and respect.

The general context in which independent school principals practiced was different from that of other school systems in Alberta. Also, the role descriptions of these principals included responsibilities often designated to

others (superintendent, secretary-treasurer) in other systems. Therefore, it was surmised that their cognitive orientations would tend to differ from those in public/separate schools. Bolman and Deal's (1992) hypotheses were helpful in understanding how these principals used the reframing process in order to lead successfully in their unique context and culture. They identified a number of frame-related issues and actions in order to categorize responses in their frame references. Their criteria for coding frame responses (Table 3) and their dimensions of leadership frames (see their Table 2.1, p. 27) were used in this study to examine the way that the Alberta respondents used the frames and the resultant influence on their leadership.

Structural frame. Bolman and Deal (1992) maintained that "policies, procedures, legal requirements, committees, and control systems appeared to be recognized features of life in schools everywhere" (p. 318). Through school visitations and review of policy documents, it was apparent that the principals in the study were very adept at using the structural frame in that these schools were operated efficiently. Analytical and organizational expertise in the financial, facility, and policy areas of these schools was evident. These aspects of school operation in a public/separate system flow primarily from central office, and although this situation may change somewhat relative to current government policy, the traditional legislated structure of Alberta school systems is still operative. Interestingly, the regional offices of education have, to a degree, perhaps unintentionally paralleled the central office of public/separate systems in the independent school milieu. The principals in the independent schools, although providing certain administrative and leadership expertise of a superintendent, drew on

Table 3

Criteria for Coding Frame Responses

Frame	Frame-related issues	Frame-related actions
Structural	Coordination and control; clarity or lack of clarity about goals, roles, or expectations; references to planning, budgeting, and evaluation; discussion of analysis or its absence (e.g., feasibility studies, institutional analyses); issues around policies and procedures	Reorganizing, implementing, or clarifying policies and procedures; developing new information, budgeting, or control systems, adding new structural units, planning processes
Human resource	Discussions of individual's feelings, needs, preferences, or abilities (e.g., problems of individual performance or staff quality); references to the importance of participation, listening, open communications, involvement in decision making, morale; discussion of interpersonal relationships; emphasis on collaboration, win-win, and a sense of family or community	Processes of participation and involvement (task forces, open meetings, etc.), training, recruiting new staff, workshops and retreats, empowerment, organization development, and quality-of-work-life programs
Political	Focus on conflict or tension among different constituencies, interest groups, or organizations; competing interests and agendas; disputes over allocation of scarce resources; games of power and self-interest	Bargaining, negotiation, advocacy, building alliances, and networking with other key players
Symbolic	Discussions of institutional identity, culture, or symbols; discussions of the image that will be projected to different audiences; discussion of the symbolic importance of existing practices, rituals, or artifacts (e.g., symbolic attachment to an old building or campus); emphasis on influencing how different audiences will interpret or frame an activity or decision	Creating or revitalizing ceremonies and rituals; working to develop or restate the institution's vision, working on influencing organizational culture, using self as a symbol

Source: Bolman and Deal (1995, p. 317).

the regional office as a source for their technical knowledge in the financial, facility, and policy areas related to legislated regulations.

However, school-developed policy relative to school constituents, the school philosophy, and the culture had clearly been developed from their institutional perspective. The regulatory aspects of the school's operation, assisted by expertise and advice from the regional office, were perceived by most as necessary and important aspects of being "good citizens" and "law-abiding citizens" and as the "business aspect" of getting prepared for and being permitted to practice their "calling." The collegial aspects of their relationship with the regional office consultants, as previously discussed, was regarded as far more important. As a factor influencing their successful leadership, these principals did not dwell on the structural dimensions of leadership, although their analytical and organizational abilities were evidenced in their practice.

Political frame. The use of the political dimension was found to be different in independent schools from what the author has observed in public/separate schools. Bolman and Deal (1995) provided assistance in examining the political dimension relevant to independent schools as outlined in their Table 2.1 (p. 27) and in the issues and actions previously described in Table 3. That the respondents were powerful was demonstrated through their ability to mobilize people and resources, to elicit support and cooperation, and to develop alliances for a strong base of support (Bolman & Deal, 1995) from all constituents. A very careful selection of staff, regular contact with parents (when available), a high profile among students, and regular contact with trustees enabled these principals to mobilize people and resources, get support and cooperation, and develop alliances for a strong base of support. The political advantages of their efforts were not lost on

them. However, their motivation in teacher selection and networking with all constituents, as noted above, was primarily oriented to human resource facilitation and symbolic leadership rather than politics.

Bolman and Deal (1995) identified a number of facets within the political dimension: being a skillful negotiator, responding well to organizational conflict, being politically sensitive and skillful, and knowing how to win when against opposition. These may have been characteristics of the respondents. However, a focus on conflict or tension, competing interests and agendas, disputes over allocation of resources, games of power, and self-interest issues, as identified by Bolman and Deal's frame-related issues, were not evidenced among these principals. Frame-related actions (Table 3) such as bargaining, negotiation, advocacy, building alliances, and networking with other key players, when evidenced, were employed to assist in the human resource and symbolic dimensions.

Greenfield (1995) provided additional insights into the political dimension. He stated that several factors contribute to what he termed the *demand environment* of the school: the moral character of the school; a highly educated, autonomous, and essentially permanent workforce; and regular and unpredictable threats to stability. He cited five interrelated role demands that create the principal's demand environment: moral, social/ interpersonal, instructional, managerial, and political (Cuban, 1984; Greenfield, 1988; both cited in Greenfield, 1995). The researcher identified politics as a specific role demand. In the realm of the public/separate school superintendent and principal, most aspects of Greenfield's demand environment present the occasional need or opportunity to use Bolman and Deal's (1995) political dimension. Several aspects of Greenfield's demand

principals in an independent school in that reactive boards, parents, students, and faculty are not the norm as they may be in public/separate schools and systems.

Human resource frame. The principals in the study routinely employed the human resources dimension to a greater extent than the structural and political frames. They cited all of the issues and actions identified in Bolman and Deal's (1995) human resource frame as critical, ongoing aspects of their roles that required attention (see Table 3). When functioning in the human resources dimension, the principals acted as supportive and participative servant leaders in that they served the best interests of the school's stakeholders. They demonstrated their supportive and caring attitude by showing trust, respect, and concern for all constituents. As previously noted, these principals took exceptional care when hiring teachers. They ensured the enculturation and performance of new and senior staff through focusing on those aspects of the human resource frame identified in Table 3 under frame-related issues and actions such as personal attention, emphasis on participation, listening, open communication, involvement in decision making, morale, discussions of interpersonal relationships, emphasis on collaboration, a win-win approach, and a sense of family or community. The principals reported the use of all of the aforementioned aspects of the human resource dimension. Using institutional theory, Ogawa and Bossert (1995) confirmed the importance of Bolman and Deal's (1995) human resource dimension, stating that, from an institutional perspective, social interactions are critical aspects of organizational leadership. The respondents emphasized the importance of such interactions and were careful to foster them through supportive, participative activities. They

ensured that all constituents were assured and reminded that they were important assets to the school community.

Symbolic frame. The influence of culture and the respondents' involvement and emphasis on the symbolic dimensions of leadership suggest that these principals, regardless of the existence of fewer demands in the structural and political dimensions, would have to demonstrate expertise in the use of symbolism. Over half of the respondents appeared to perceive issues and actions through the lens of the symbolic frame. Interestingly, none of the principals perceived themselves as charismatic, although all demonstrated characteristics identified in Bolman and Deal's (1993) symbolic dimension. Institutional identity, symbols, culture, ceremonies, and rituals were identified and emphasized. These principals spent considerable time in reflecting upon and expanding their efforts in creating or maintaining important ceremonies and rituals. They described the pitfalls and negative outcomes related to attempts to influence or change them without considerable care and caution. The respondents identified particular artifacts, rituals, and specific locations, noting how they were used and where and why they occurred. They confirmed the requirement of their personal physical presence and participation as proof of their loyalty and to verify the validity of the symbolic occasion.

Ogawa and Bossert (1995) suggested that "organizations erect structures to reflect cultural roles in their external environments and . . . that organizations conduct activities around those structures to facilitate the development of shared meaning and value among organizations' members; that is, to develop culture" (p. 237). Sergiovanni (1986) concluded that "underlying the cultural perspective is the concept of community and the importance of shared meaning and shared values" (p. 8).

Summary. Data collected from the study suggest that the majority of principals were successful in being able to interpret and respond to the unique circumstances of the independent school context. Bolman and Deal's (1993) conceptualization of *frames* and *reframing* provided a structure with which not only the rational but also the complex meta-rational dynamics of complex organizations can be studied. In this small sample the respondents differed from the norm suggested by Bolman and Deal. They found that principals on the average use two frames and that the symbolic frame is used much less than any other. In this sample all respondents identified using the political frame the least. The structural frame was perceived as a management frame through which they "dutifully" performed mundane tasks. None of the respondents perceived their leadership position as a manager's role. Less than half the principals used the structural and human resources frames consistently and the symbolic frame occasionally. Over half used the structural, human resources, and symbolic frame consistently. Most of the respondents used several dimensions of the political frame, but they did not use them frequently. None used the structural frame exclusively, and one used the structural and human resources frames predominantly. Six appeared to employ the structural, human resource, and symbolic frames regularly. Four operated through the human resource and symbolic frames most of the time. Two respondents operated primarily through the symbolic dimension. Most of these principals were capable of using three frames on a regular basis, and more than half employed the symbolic frame in their practice.

The leaders in this study exhibited many of the characteristics of leadership that have been identified in the literature. The respondents used the human resources frame demonstrating characteristics and practices of

transformational and cultural leaders identified by Bennis (1984), Burns (1978), Kammert and Augenstein (1990), and Tichy and Devanna (1986). These principals focused on developing a strong organizational culture (Owens, 1988) with which they identified and to which they were personally loyal.

In this regard, Ogawa and Bossert (1995) stated that, from an institutional perspective, social interactions are critical aspects of organizational leadership. The respondents in this study were careful to foster such interactions with supportive, participative activities and through their attention to the cultural and inspirational activities of the human resource and symbolic dimensions identified by Bolman and Deal (1993).

The principals were influenced by external factors such as legislation and the regional offices, governance and organizational structures, constituent groups, and the culture and context within which they were expected to lead. These factors influenced the principals' ability to reframe as these multiple influences exerted demands on their environment. Table 4 depicts the respondents' reported or implied use of specific facets of Bolman and Deal's (1993) four frames.

Implications

Bryk et al. (1993) noted that they used a comparative framework between public and independent schools (public versus Catholic in the U.S.) to illustrate the difficult conditions under which public educators in the U.S. work. These researchers contended that

> they are among the few in our society who confront, day in and day out, the social and personal problems that many citizens are reluctant even to acknowledge, much less address directly. We

Table 4
Respondents' Use of Bolman and Deal's (1993) Four Frames

Leadership frame	Not reported or implied	Reported occasionally	Frequently reported
Structural dimensions			
I. Analytic:			
• Thinks clearly and logically			✓
• Approaches problems through careful analysis			✓
• Approaches problems with facts and logic	✓		
• Pays strict attention to detail	✓		
II. Organized:			
• Very well organized		✓	
• Develops and implements clear policies		✓	
• Provides clear, consistent goals and direction		✓	
• Strongly believes in clear structures and systems		✓	
Political dimensions			
I. Powerful:			
• Able to mobilize people and resources		✓	
• Highly persuasive and influential		✓	
• Effective in getting support and cooperation			✓
• Develops alliances for a strong base of support			✓
II. Adroit:			
• Very skillful negotiator	✓		
• Responds well to organizational conflict	✓		
• Politically sensitive and skillful		✓	
• Knows how to win when against opposition	✓		
Human resource dimensions			
I. Supportive:			
• Shows support and concern for others			✓
• Shows concern for others' feelings			✓
• Is consistently responsive to others		✓	
• Gives recognition for work well done			✓
II. Participative:			
• Fosters involvement in decisions			✓
• Listens well		✓	
• Is open to new ideas			✓
• Highly participative manager			✓
Symbolic dimensions			
I. Inspirational:			
• Inspires others to do their best			✓
• Communicates a strong vision			✓
• Generates loyalty		✓	
• Raises enthusiasm		✓	
II. Charismatic:			
• Leads with an emphasis on culture			✓
• Highly imaginative and creative			✓
• Generates new, exacting possibilities			✓
• Highly charismatic			✓

> are convinced that the work of these educators can be more effective and more personally rewarding if conducted in environments similar to those described in this book. (p. 326)

This study has implications for principals in both independent and public/separate schools for their current and future practice. Philosophical congruence, respect, and trust among school constituents and the influence of culture and tradition on leadership all have relevance for effective behavior of principals.

Implications for Practice

Principals should understand the prevailing philosophy of various constituents and attempt to enhance a high degree of philosophical congruence between the external and internal school constituents in that the constituents are part of and influence the school culture, which creates the context of their leadership. Principals should be able to articulate and analyze their personal philosophy of education and determine the extent to which it is congruent with the culture of the school. Philosophical congruence in independent schools noticeably affects the culture and enhances the leadership context of the principal. Such knowledge provides the basis for understanding what the current status of the school is and for establishing priorities. Philosophical congruence among all independent school constituents also enhances the development of trust and respect and permits the principal to devote more effort towards the human resource and symbolic dimensions of leadership.

Purky and Smith (1982) indicated that successful leadership is influenced by the school culture and by the principal's understanding of the school's culture. Further, Deal (1991) implied that an important activity is to describe the school culture in writing and to identify traditions,

ceremonies, rituals, and symbols that are embedded in the culture. Sergiovanni (1991), Lambert (1988), and Bolman and Deal (1992) suggested that identifying these processes can enhance determining the cultural status of the school, whether change is required, whether change can be implemented, the speed with which change can be made, and from where the change must emanate. The process of identifying the culture in a written format is important; otherwise it can remain an ethereal entity couched in vague descriptions and perceptions and understood only partially, usually when it influences the principal in a difficult circumstance.

It is important for principals to understand the meanings of culture, tradition, ceremonies, and rituals. Knowledge of these critical factors strongly influenced the successful leadership of most respondents in the study. Some initially perceived these terms in a negative manner and indicated that no culture or traditions were evident in the school, nor did they under any circumstances use ceremonies or rituals. However, the provision of definitions and examples resulted in the identification of a culture replete with traditions, ceremonies, and rituals. Some respondents (even in denominational schools) suggested that these terms, particularly ceremonies, rituals, and symbolism, had a negative connotation. They noted their reticence in labeling school "activities" with these descriptors. Some confirmed the value of identifying the culture and of symbolic activities and requested additional literature on the subject to "sharpen" their perceptions.

Virtually all school systems and schools in Alberta have an educational plan, a vision/mission statement, and specific goals written in policy handbooks hung on school walls and distributed in school literature. However, Deal (1991) suggested that it is critical that principals understand and practice the symbolic role that they must play relative to activities in the

school in order to realize the school's mission. Further, Bjork (1990) stated that participating in symbolic activities "is a complicated process of change through which the individual can gain internal and external support" (p. 15).

Philosophical congruence, school culture, tradition, ceremonies, rituals, and symbols and symbolic activities play an important role in establishing a cohesive community characterized by trust and respect. The principals emphasized trust and respect from and among all constituents as critical factors influencing their leadership. In discussing fundamental aspects of culture, they identified academic achievement, religion, tradition, and discipline, noting that these cultural cornerstones were influenced by the pervasive context of trust and respect that stemmed from philosophical congruence.

School systems and schools often attempt to alleviate discipline problems through practices identified in the structural dimension presented by Bolman and Deal (1992). The principals in the study suggested that independent schools have a reputation for strict discipline; however, they implied that discipline was influenced to a great extent by academic achievement, religion, tradition, and practices identified in the human resource and symbolic dimensions (Bolman & Deal, 1992). A culture of trust and respect also influenced the student body relative to discipline.

Principals in independent schools appear to devote more time to the structural, human resource, and symbolic dimensions of leadership than to the political dimension. This may be because of philosophical congruence and the trust and respect of their constituents. The nature of independent school constituents suggests that a common philosophy would be more evident in these schools than in many public/separate schools. Principals in public/separate schools may have to devote more time to the political

dimension unless they can achieve a higher degree of philosophical congruence, trust, and respect among their constituents.

The principals in the study devoted time, care, and considerable thought when hiring staff. Subject-area knowledge, teaching skills, being a team player, and philosophical congruence are critical prerequisites. Hiring teachers with a philosophical congruence with other school constituents results in a faculty that are supportive of and contribute to the school culture and support the principal's leadership. A rotational system of board elections also reduces the phenomenon of reactive boards.

Principals in independent schools should establish professional collegial relationships through professional associations and organizations. Attendance at and participation in such meetings, seminars, and conventions are critical to ensuring that they are current in educational leadership and establish a network of colleagues with whom they can discuss problems or seek advice.

A diminishing of consultative services from the regional offices of education may result in less communication, understanding, and cooperation between independent schools and government.

There may be a need to establish an organization of independent school principals in the province to provide for their professional and collegial requirements.

Implications and Recommendations for Research

This study examined a small sample of independent schools in Alberta. A review of the literature indicated that Shapiro's (1985) assessment that research in this area has not been extensive is still current. The principals in the study were pleased to receive the attention generated by this study.

They indicated a need, both professionally and personally, to know what others in their field were experiencing and how they viewed leadership in the context of independent schools.

Elam et al. (1992) suggested that discontent with public schools may be increasing; however, Fennell (1993) noted that there is confusion as to precisely what is desired by the public. In Alberta, attempts to improve the offerings of the public system have been evidenced through the provision of alternative programs, charter schools, and, most recently, religious alternative programs. Private (independent) schools have always been part of the educational landscape beside the public/separate systems, although they have received little attention in the literature relative to their culture and the leadership context of these schools. One of the contributions of this study is the provision of a conceptual window through which to understand the culture and leadership context of these schools.

Principals in Alberta are currently adapting to a shift from provincial direction of public education to a locally based management and implementation model wherein site-based management, parent councils, and some duties formerly in the superintendent's domain are devolving to the principals (Alberta Education, 1994). Independent school principals have traditionally coped with site-based management and parent boards, as well as fulfilling the role and duties of both superintendent and principal and often those of the financial officer. The study contributes to the literature on leadership through an examination of the factors that influence the leadership context in eight independent schools in Alberta. Those factors and the context that influence leadership provide worthwhile information for principals generally and a basis for further research, particularly when

considering the recent changes by the provincial government relative to locally based management and implementation (Alberta Education, 1994).

Although the results of this study may not be generalizable to a large number of independent schools, replicating the study in other independent schools in Alberta and elsewhere may be valuable. The addition of a quantitative component of the study and a closer focus on the use of the symbolic dimension by independent schools may provide valuable information for principals.

Bolman and Deal (1992) stated that "school administrators use the symbolic frame much less than any other" (p. 328). Deal (1991) confirmed that "symbols and symbolic activity play an important role in creating a cohesive community," that principals "need to give time and attention to symbolic issues," and that those "who work in private schools need a shared framework and language for identifying cultural patterns" (p. 418). Further research is necessary to examine influences, to create explicit definitions and terminology, to establish identification procedures, and to provide methodological procedures to provide insight for candidates and principals into the understanding and use of philosophical congruence, culture, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, and symbolic activities. Bolman and Deal (1993) maintained that research on symbolism and symbolic leadership has important implications for principals in all schools and requires further research to ensure that symbolic issues do not "lurk in the background without being made explicit" (p. 318). Recent research from Ogawa and Bossert (1995) indicated that institutional theory may provide an approach to examining school leadership, particularly in independent schools where the success of the school and the principal appear to be dependent on mutual leadership in a context emphasizing trust and respect. Most of the

principals in this study were acutely aware of these factors and used them in their effective practice regularly; however, all implied a desire to access further information. This study contributes to the research in identifying the value of the important aspects of the human resource and symbolic dimensions and in identifying a group of principals who are aware of and use these factors on a regular basis. Independent school principals may also provide an excellent, cooperative resource for further research.

These principals in independent schools in Alberta operated in somewhat different contexts from their counterparts in other provinces and, as noted by Aitken (1992), in the U.S. For example, the relationship established between these principals and the consultants from the regional offices of education may be unique. This relationship between principals and a government agency acting as a "surrogate" central office should be studied further, particularly with the reduction in local administrative services, the amalgamation of public/separate school boards in Alberta into larger units, the reduction of consultative services by Alberta Education, and additional duties being legislated for Alberta principals (Alberta Education, 1995). Current technology would allow for a central external agency or agencies to provide direct financial, consultative, and management services for all boards/schools in the province (Alberta Education, 1993, personal communication).

Some constraints on superintendents and principals, defined and discussed by other researchers (Eastcott et al., 1974; Good & Brophy, 1986; Murphy, 1987; Sweeney, 1982), were evident in these schools; however, the respondents did not dwell upon them at length. This may be because a range of constraints relative to the political dimension of leadership was absent. These principals appeared to devote more time and

effort to structural, human resource, and symbolic dimensions of their context than those in public/separate schools do, probably because of the philosophical congruence, trust, and respect of their constituents. Deal (1991) suggested that further research is required on "shaping" (p. 418) the school culture to eliminate or lessen critical constraints and prevent principals, as Wirt (1990) mentioned, from becoming involved in "the ocean of trivial management and storms of conflict" (p. 74).

Holdaway (1986) suggested that the value of research could be assessed by examining its ability "to provide different conceptions, to reformulate problems, to furnish new insights, to sharpen perceptions, and to stimulate discussion and questioning" (p. 255). A major contribution of this study has been to provide, through a small sample of respondents and the use of Bolman and Deal's (1992) conceptual framework for examining leadership dimensions, a window for understanding the leadership context of independent school principals and the factors that influence their leadership. Principals in both independent and public/separate schools will be able to extract findings that will assist them in their own practice. Researchers have been presented with several research possibilities emanating from a cooperative, interested sample of principals who have previously received little attention.

Concluding Remarks

Researchers such as Elam et al. (1992), Fennell (1993), and Bergen (1981) have commented on a growing dissatisfaction with public schooling. Murphy (1996) noted that some American reformers have suggested that the poor results in schools are caused by "the depersonalization of schooling, hierarchical management systems, a moribund production

function, and an absence of accountability--that can be traced to the public monopoly status of education and that can be addressed by market-based reform initiatives" (p. 138). Murphy noted that schools, along with other organizations, are struggling to improve or change "the way they think and act" (p. 164). He identified two important alterations that are occurring: "(a) at the institutional level, a change from professional to lay control, and (b) at the managerial level, a change from a bureaucratic operational system to more entrepreneurial views of schooling" (p. 164). In Alberta the provincial government has recently created policy that addresses these issues.

To a great extent independent schools have for many years operated in a context that others are now considering. This study has examined factors that influence the leadership of independent school principals. Among many others, one factor was pervasive in influencing the success of the principals and the schools: the philosophical congruence of the school constituents who demonstrate the attributes of trust and respect. The existence of this factor enabled principals to practice with minimal influence from the detrimental problems previously noted by Murphy (1996). Other factors such as flexible governance; academics; religion; discipline; and an emphasis on culture, tradition, and symbolism were also very important and may be employed successfully in other schools. However, until schools are able to establish philosophical congruence among their constituents, it may be difficult to replace some current public negative attitudes with trust and respect and the positive environment that results from these attributes.

The main contribution of this study has been to identify the factors in independent schools that influence the leadership behavior of principals. This research has contributed to the knowledge of leadership in independent

schools and has provided worthwhile information for other principals. It has identified areas requiring further research, and, through the use of a conceptual framework, it has provided knowledge relative to the use of cognitive structures by principals in the practice of school leadership.

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Appendix A

List of Approved Private Schools in Alberta

March 14, 1997

Approved Private Schools in Alberta, March 14, 1997

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Academic Excellence Accredited	504, 910 - 7 Ave. S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2P 3N8	7-12
Airdrie Koinonia Christian School Funded and Accredited	R. R. #1 Airdrie, Alberta T4B 2A3	ECS-9
Akiva Academy Funded and Accredited	140 Haddon Road S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2V 2Y3	ECS-6
Alberta Bosco Homes Funded and Accredited	Box 4100 Sherwood Park, Alberta T8A 2A7	Special Education
Alberta Centre for Chinese Studies Funded and Accredited	Box 2104 Stony Plain, Alberta T7Z 1X6	10-12
Alberta College Funded and Accredited	10050 MacDonald Drive Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2B7	10-12
Almont Rose Centre for Learning Accredited	9919 Manning Avenue Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 2B8	10-12
Almont Rose Centre for Learning - Red Deer Accredited	5401 - 48 Avenue Red Deer, Alberta T4N 3V1	10-12
Apostolic Christian Training School Funded and Accredited	615 Northmount Dr. N.W. Calgary, Alberta T2K 3J6	ECS-12
Banbury Crossroads School Funded and Accredited	101, 1410 - 1 St. S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2R 0V8	ECS-11
Banff Mountain Academy Funded and Accredited	103 Caribou Street Banff, Alberta T0L 0C0	9-12
Bellis Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 116 Bellis, Alberta T0A 0J0	ECS-12
Bethel Christian Academy Funded and Accredited	142, 3350 27 Street N.E. Calgary, Alberta T1Y 5E4	ECS-6

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Blue Quills First Nations College Funded and Accredited	Box 189 St. Paul, Alberta T0A 3T0	10-12
Blumenort Mennonite School Registered	Box 988 LaCrete, Alberta T0H 2Y0	1-9
Brant Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 130 Brant, Alberta T0L 0L0	ECS-10
Buffalo Creek Learning Centre Accredited	Box 6000 Innisfail, Alberta T4G 1V1	6-12
Calgary Academy Funded and Accredited	Box 103, Site 2, SS3 Calgary, Alberta T3C 3N9	1-12
Calgary Chinese Alliance School Accredited	150 Beddington Boulevard N.E. Calgary, Alberta T3K 2E2	10-12
Calgary Chinese Private School Accredited	239, 197 - 1 Street S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2P 4M4	10-12
Calgary Christian High School Funded and Accredited	5029 - 26 Avenue S.W Calgary, Alberta T3E 0R5	7-12
Calgary Christian School Funded and Accredited	2839 - 49 Street S.W Calgary, Alberta T3E 3X9	ECS-6
Calgary French School Funded and Accredited	6304 Larkspur Way S.W. Calgary, Alberta T3E 5P7	ECS-6
Calgary International College Accredited	1100, 833 - 4 Ave. S.W Calgary, Alberta T2P 3T5	9-12
Calgary Islamic School Funded and Accredited	225 - 28 Street SE Calgary, Alberta T2A 5K4	ECS-6

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Calgary Jewish Academy Funded and Accredited	6700 Kootenay Street S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2V 1P7	ECS-9
Calgary Montessori School Funded and Accredited	c/o Clem Gardner Elementary School 5915 Lewis Drive S.W. Calgary, Alberta T3E 5Z4	ECS-6
Calgary Quest School Funded and Accredited	130 - 7330 Fisher St. S.E. Calgary, Alberta T2H 2H8	Severe special needs
Calgary Waldorf School Funded and Accredited	1915 - 36 Avenue S.W Calgary, Alberta T2T 2G6	ECS-9
Calvin Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 40 Monarch, Alberta T0L 1M0	ECS-12
Canadian Choral Music School Funded and Accredited	305 - 10 Ave. S.E. Calgary, Alberta T2G 0W9	1-9
Canadian International Language School Registered	Suite 1350, 815 - 8 Avenue S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2P 3P2	7-12
Cascade Centre Funded and Accredited	2612 - 37 Avenue N.E Calgary, Alberta T1Y 5L2	10-12
Centennial Montessori School Funded and Accredited	6755 - 88 Street Edmonton, Alberta T6E 4Y4	ECS-12
Central Alberta Christian High School Funded and Accredited	22 Eagle Road Lacombe, Alberta T4L 1G7	10-12
Cherry Coulee Christian Academy Funded and Accredited	Box 1037 Bow Island, Alberta T0K 0G0	ECS-9

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Chief Mountain School Funded and Accredited	Box 1630 Pincher Creek, Alberta T0K 1W0	1-7
Chief Shot Both Sides School Accredited	Box 85 Standoff, Alberta T0L 1Y0	ECS-12
Chinook Winds Adventist Academy Funded and Accredited	Box 23, Site 12, S.S. 1 Calgary, Alberta T2M 4N3	1-12
Christopher Robin School Accredited	1011 Beverly Blvd. S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2V 2C4	1-3
Cleardale Mennonite School Registered	Box 597 Hines Creek, Alberta T0H 2A0	1-9
Clearwater Academy Funded and Accredited	Suite 102, 1509 - Centre Street SW Calgary, Alberta T2G 2E6	ECS-10
Coaldale Christian School Funded and Accredited	2008 - 8 Street Coaldale, Alberta T1M 1L1	ECS-9
College Heights Adventist Funded and Accredited	185 College Avenue College Heights, Alberta T4L 1Z6	ECS-9
Columbia College Accredited	802 Manning Road N.E. Calgary, Alberta T2E 7N8	1-12
Concordia Continuing Education High School Accredited	9359 - 67A Street Edmonton, Alberta T6B 1R7	10-12
Concordia High School Funded and Accredited	7128 Ada Boulevard Edmonton, Alberta T5B 4E4	10-12
Connections Canada Inc. Accredited	#1000, 10089 Jasper Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5J 1V1	10-12

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Coralwood Adventist Academy Funded and Accredited	13510 - 122 Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5L 2V8	ECS-10
Cornerstone Christian Academy Funded and Accredited	Box 99 Kingman, Alberta T0B 2M0	ECS-12
Cornerstone Christian School Funded and Accredited	8 Leech Court, Box 1599, C124 Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 7Y5	ECS-10
Countryside Christian School Registered	Box 113 Edberg, Alberta T0B 1J0	1-9
Covenant Canadian Reformed School Funded and Accredited	Box 67 Neerlandia, Alberta T0G 1R0	1-11
Covenant Christian Funded and Accredited	Box 3827 Leduc, Alberta T9E 6M7	ECS-9
Cremona Koinonia Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 81 Cremona, Alberta T0M 0R0	1-12
Dante Alighieri School of Italian Language Funded and Accredited	11624 - 81 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5B 2S2	10-12
Delta West Academy Funded and Accredited	#307, 1111 - 11 Avenue S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2R 0G5	1-12
Devon Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 5390 Devon, Alberta T9G 1Y1	ECS-9
Diaspora Continuing Education Accredited	#211, 8204 - 104 Street Edmonton, Alberta T6E 4E6	10-12
Duchess Bethel Mennonite School Registered	Box 150, R.R. 1 Tilley, Alberta T0J 3K0	1-10

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Echo Valley Christian School Registered	Box 19 Bluffton, Alberta T0C 0M0	1-9
Edison School Funded and Accredited	Box 21, Site 8, RR1 Okotoks, Alberta T0L 1T0	ECS-8
Edmonton Academy Funded and Accredited	10231 - 120 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2A4	Special education
Edmonton Bible Heritage Christian School Registered	Box 7006, Station "M" Edmonton, Alberta T5E 5S9	1-10
Edmonton Christian High Funded and Accredited	14304 - 109 Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5N 1H6	10-12
Edmonton Islamic School Funded and Accredited	13070 - 113 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5E 5A8	ECS-9
Edmonton Menorah Academy Funded and Accredited	10735 - 144 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5N 3L1	ECS-11
Educere Learning Centre Funded and Accredited	430, 910 - 7 Avenue S.W Calgary, Alberta T2P 3N8	10-10
Elves Child Development Centre Funded and Accredited	10825 -142 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5N 3Y7	Special Education
Equilibrium International Education Institute Funded and Accredited	#360, 703 - 6 Avenue S.W Calgary, Alberta T2P 0T9	10-12
Fairview Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 185 Fairview, Alberta T0H 1L0	3-9
Faith Lutheran School Funded and Accredited	8540 - 69 Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T6E 0R6	ECS-9

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Foothills Academy Funded and Accredited	745 - 37 Street N.W. Calgary, Alberta T2N 4T1	1-12
Fort McMurray Christian School Funded and Accredited	160 Dickens Drive Fort McMurray, Alberta T9K 1R4	1-7
Fort Saskatchewan Christian Funded and Accredited	9935 - 93 Avenue Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta T8L 1N5	ECS-9
Froebel's Garden of Children Funded and Accredited	415 Whiteridge Crescent N.E., Calgary, Alberta T1Y 2Y9	ECS-2
Genesis Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 5634 Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 3G6	K-11
German Language School Accredited	10135 - 85 Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T6E 2K1	10-12
German Language School of Calgary Accredited	201, 3112 11 Street N.E Calgary, Alberta T2E 7J1	10-12
German Saturday School Funded and Accredited	10014 - 81 Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T6E 1W8	10-12
German School Edelweiss- MacDonald Funded and Accredited	12424 - 103 Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5N 0R3	10-12
German School Edelweiss- Pentecostal Accredited	12424 - 103 Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5N 0R3	10-12
Gil Vicente School Accredited	9578 - 118 Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5G 0P1	10-12
Glenmore Christian Academy Funded and Accredited	16520 - 24 ST S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2J 5G5	ECS-9
Grace Christian Campus Funded and Accredited	c/o 119 Deermont Way SE. Calgary, Alberta T5J 5P4	1-10

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Grande Prairie Christian School Funded and Accredited	8202 - 110 Street Grande Prairie, Alberta T8W 1M3	ECS-12
Greek Community School Accredited	One Tamarac Crescent S.W Calgary, Alberta T3C 3B7	10-12
Hellenic Community Heritage Funded and Accredited	10450 - 116 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2S4	10-12
Henderson College Accredited	450, 401 - 9 Avenue S.W Calgary, Alberta T2P 3C5	10-12
Heritage Christian School N.E Funded and Accredited	155Falconridge Cr. N.E. Calgary, Alberta T3J 1Z9	ECS-12
Heritage Christian School N.W. Funded and Accredited	5300 - 53 Avenue N.W Calgary, Alberta T3A 2G8	ECS-9
Heritage Christian School W. Funded and Accredited	2020 - 6 Street N.W. Calgary, Alberta T2M 3G3	ECS-6
High Level Christian Academy Funded and Accredited	Box 58 High Level, Alberta T0H 1Z0	ECS-9
Hillcrest Christian School Funded and Accredited	10306 - 102 Street Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 2W3	ECS-12
Hispanic Saturday School Accredited	14403 - 117 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5X 1N3	10-12
Hope Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 235 Champion, Alberta T0L 0R0	1-12
Horizon School Special Education Funded and Accredited	5401 - 53 St. Olds, Alberta T4H 1T3	Special Education

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Immanuel Christian School Funded and Accredited	802- 6 Avenue North Lethbridge, Alberta T1H 0S1	ECS-12
Islamic Institute of Education Funded and Accredited	7532 Meridian Street Edmonton, Alberta T6P 1R5	7-12
Italian School of Calgary Accredited	24 Beddington Way N.E. T3K 1N9 Calgary, Alberta T3K 1N9	10-12
Ivan Franko Ukrainian Accredited	5234 - 45B Avenue Vegreville, Alberta T9C 1L3	10-12
Kneehill Christian School Registered	Box 370 Linden, Alberta T0M 1J0	1-9
Koinonia Christian School (Red Deer) Funded and Accredited	6014 - 57 Avenue Red Deer, Alberta T4N 4S9	ECS-12
Lacombe Christian School Funded and Accredited	5206 - 58 Street Lacombe, Alberta T4L 1G9	ECS-9
Lakeland Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 8397 Cold Lake, Alberta T0A 0V0	1-12
Lakeland Country School Registered	Box 161 Dewberry, Alberta T0B 1G0	1-9
Lakeview Christian Registered	Box 1057 Stettler, Alberta T0C 2L0	1-9
Language School-German Canadian Club Accredited	3127 Bow Wood Dr. N.W. Calgary, Alberta T3B 3E7	10-12
Learning Academy of Canada Funded and Accredited	No. 503, 665 - 8 Street S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2P 3K7	10-12

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Learning Experience Funded and Accredited	Lacombe Ctre. 14540 Bannister Road S.E Calgary, Alberta T2X 1Z4	ECS-1
Lethbridge Christian School Funded and Accredited	2010 -5 Avenue North Lethbridge, Alberta T1H 0N5	ECS-9
Level Land Junior Academy Funded and Accredited	Box 100 Beiseker, Alberta T0M 0G0	1-5
Life Values School Funded and Accredited	Box 1453 St. Paul, Alberta T0A 3A0	1-10
Lighthouse Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 907 Sylvan Lake, Alberta T0M 1Z0	ECS-12
Little Pony Private Institute of Fine Arts School Funded and Accredited	Box 936 Fort Macleod, Alberta T0L 0Z0	2-11
Living Faith Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 100 Caroline, Alberta T0M 0M0	1-12
Living Springs Christian School Registered	P.O. Box 672 Hythe, Alberta T0H 2C0	1-9
Living Waters Christian Academy Funded and Accredited	5 Grove Drive West Spruce Grove, Alberta T7X 3X8	ECS-9
Lucy Baker Funded and Accredited	R.R. #1 Warburg, Alberta T0C 2T0	8-12
Lycee Louis Pasteur Funded and Accredited	4416 - 16 St.S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2T 4H9	ECS-9
Machitawin Centre Accredited	10105 - 97 Avenue Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 0N5	7-12
Mamawi Atosketan Native School Funded and Accredited	R.R. #4 Ponoka, Alberta T4J 1R4	ECS-9

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Manning Adult Learning Centre Accredited	P.O. Box 2290 Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3H7	1-12
Maranatha Christian Academy Funded and Accredited	Box 369 Fox Creek, Alberta T0H 1P0	ECS-7
Maskwachees Cultural School Accredited	Box 360 Hobbema, Alberta T0C 1N0	10-12
Mayerthorpe Academy of Christian Learning Registered	Box 277 Mayerthorpe, Alberta T0E 1N0	1-12
Meadowlark Christian Funded and Accredited	9825 - 158 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5P 2X4	ECS-9
Medicine Hat Christian School Funded and Accredited	68 Rice Drive S.E. Medicine Hat, Alberta T1B 3X2	ECS-9
Menno Simons Christian School Funded and Accredited	307 - 55 Ave. S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2H 0A3	ECS-9
Millwoods Christian Funded and Accredited	8704 Millwoods Road Edmonton, Alberta T6K 3J3	ECS-12
Moberly Hall Funded and Accredited	194B Grenfell Crescent Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 2M6	1-10
Montessori Elementary of Calgary Funded and Accredited	2105 Cliff St. S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2S 2G4	1-4
Montessori School of Calgary Registered	2105 Cliff Street S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2S 2G4	ECS-2
Morinville Christian Funded and Accredited	10515 - 100 Avenue Morinville, Alberta T8R 1A2	1-12
Mountain Gate Community School Funded and Accredited	Box 1213 Canmore, Alberta T0L 0M0	1-3

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Neuanlage School Registered	Box 38 Buffalo Head Prairie, Alberta T0H 4A0	1-9
Newell Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 2063 Brooks, Alberta T1R 1C7	ECS-9
North Calgary Christian Academy Funded and Accredited	719 - 44 Ave. N.W. Calgary, Alberta T2K 0J5	ECS-11
North Country School Funded and Accredited	Bag 1 Joussard, Alberta T0G 1J0	1-11
North Edmonton Christian Funded and Accredited	13470 Fort Road Edmonton, Alberta T5A 1C5	ECS-9
Northern Lights School Registered	R.R. 1, Site 4, Box 19 Spirit River, Alberta T0H 3G0	1-9
Olds Koinonia Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 4039 Olds, Alberta T4H 1P7	ECS-12
Olds Mountain View Christian Funded and Accredited	R.R. #1, Site 4, Box 5 Sundre, Alberta T0M 1X0	1-12
Opportunity Avenues Program Accredited	#301, 10526 Jasper Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5J 1Z4	7-12
Parkland Immanuel Funded and Accredited	21304 - 35 Avenue, NW Edmonton, Alberta T6M 2P6	ECS-12
Parkland School Funded and Accredited	6016 - 45 Avenue Red Deer, Alberta T4N 3M4	Special Education
Parkview Adventist Academy Funded and Accredited	251 College Avenue College Heights, Alberta T4L 2E7	10-12
Peace Hills Adventist Academy Funded and Accredited	R.R. #3 Wetaskiwin, Alberta T9A 1X1	1-9

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Peace Mennonite School Registered	Box 640 La Crete, Alberta T0H 2H0	1-10
Peace River Adventist Junior Academy Funded and Accredited	10701 - 101 Street Peace River, Alberta T8S 1L4	1-9
Pine Valley SDA Funded and Accredited	P.O. Box 1120 Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 4B5	1-12
Ponoka Christian School Funded and Accredited	6300 - 50 Street Ponoka, Alberta T4J 1E6	ECS-9
Prairie Christian School Registered	Box 631 Raymond, Alberta T0K 2S0	1-12
Prairie Elementary School Funded and Accredited	Prairie Bible Institute Box 4000 Three Hills, Alberta T0M 2A0	ECS-6
Prairie High School Funded and Accredited	Prairie Bible Institute Box 4000 Three Hills, Alberta T0M 2A0	10-12
Prairie Junior High School Funded and Accredited	Prairie Bible Institute Box 4000 Three Hills, Alberta T0M 2A0	7-9
Prince of Peace Lutheran School Funded and Accredited	RR 7, Box 10, Site 17 Calgary, Alberta T1X 1E1	ECS-10
Progressive Academy Funded and Accredited	12245 - 131 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5L 1M8	ECS-12
Providence Christian School Funded and Accredited	1100 - 40 Ave., Lethbridge, Alberta T1H 6B7	ECS-12
Reading Foundation School Funded and Accredited	930 - 13 Ave. S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2R OL4	4-7

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Red Deer Adventist Academy Funded and Accredited	Box 219 Red Deer, Alberta T4N 5E8	2-9
Red Deer Christian School Funded and Accredited	14 McVicar Street Red Deer, Alberta T4N 0M1	ECS-9
Renert Centre Accredited	293 MacEwan Student Centre The University of Calgary Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4	12-12
Renfrew ECS Funded and Accredited	P.O. Box 52013 Edmonton Trail R.P.O. Calgary, Alberta T2E 8K9	ECS-2
Rimbey Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 90 Rimbey, Alberta T0C 2J0	ECS-11
Riverview Montessori School Funded and Accredited	7200 - 156 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5B 1X3	1-6
Rocky Christian School Funded and Accredited	5204 - 54 Avenue Rocky Mountain House, Alberta T0M 1T3	ECS-9
Rockyview Christian School Registered	Box 1387 Pincher Creek, Alberta T0K 1W0	1-9
Rosedale Christian School Registered	Site 5, Box 10, RR 1 Crooked Creek, Alberta T0H 0Y0	1-9
Rosenfeld School Registered	Box 38 Buffalo Head Prairie, Alberta T0H 4A0	1-8
Rundle Academy (Elementary) Funded and Accredited	2634 - 12 Avenue N.W. Calgary, Alberta T2N 1K6	4-6
Rundle College Sr High Funded and Accredited	2612 - 37 Avenue NE Calgary, Alberta T2E 4P3	10-12

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Rundle College Jr. High Funded & Accredited	930 -13 Ave. S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2R OL4	7-9
Saddle Lake Christian Accredited	Box 69 Saddle Lake, Alberta T0A 3T0	1-9
Sedgewick SDA School Funded and Accredited	R.R. #1 Sedgewick, Alberta T0B 4C0	K-7
Slave Lake Koinonia School Funded and Accredited	Box 1548 Slave Lake, Alberta T0G 2A0	1-12
Solomon Learning Institute Ltd. Accredited	#307 Campus Tower, 8625 - 112 Street Edmonton, Alberta T6G 1K8	10-12
St. Emeric Hungarian Accredited	12960 - 112 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5E 6J1	10-12
St. George's Hellenic Language School Accredited	10831 - 124 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5M 0H4	10-12
St. John Bosco Funded and Accredited	712 Fortalice Cr. S.E. Calgary, Alberta T2A 2E1	1-9
St. John's Institute Ukrainian School Accredited	11024 - 82 Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T6G 0T2	10-12
St. John's School of Alberta Funded and Accredited	R.R. #5 Stony Plain, Alberta T7Z 1X5	7-12
St. Luke's College Funded and Accredited	10419 - 159 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5P 3A6	9-12
St. Matthew Lutheran Funded and Accredited	5014 - 53 Avenue Stony Plain, Alberta T7Z 1R8	ECS-9

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
St. Michael's Academy Registered	P.O. Box 1183 Rocky Mountain House, Alberta T0M 1T0	1-8
Stirling Mennonite Day School Registered	Box 768 Raymond, Alberta T0K 2S0	1-9
Strathcona Christian School Funded and Accredited	1011 Cloverbar Road Sherwood Park, Alberta T8A 4V7	K-12
Strathcona-Tweedsmuir Funded and Accredited	RR #2 Okotoks, Alberta T0L 1T0	1-12
Swedish Language School Accredited	1917 - 10a Street S.W Calgary, Alberta T2K 3K2	10-12
Sylvan Meadows Adventist School Funded and Accredited	Box 1006B, R.R. #1 Sylvan Lake, Alberta T0M 1Z0	ECS-8
Taber Christian School Funded and Accredited	Box 4749 Taber, Alberta T1G 1E9	ECS-9
Tempo School Funded and Accredited	5603 - 148 Street Edmonton, Alberta T6H 4T7	1-12
Tilley Mennonite School Registered	General Delivery Tilley, Alberta T0J 3K0	1-10
Training Inc. Business College Accredited	526 - 5 Street South Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 2B8	9-12
Trinity Christian School Funded and Accredited	#100, 295 Midpark Way S.E. Calgary, Alberta T2X 2A8	ECS-12
Trinity Christian School (Grand Centre) Funded and Accredited	Palm Creek Recreation Centre Grand Centre, Alberta T0A 1T2	5-11
Tyndale Christian School Funded and Accredited	414 - 11a Street NE Calgary, Alberta	1-10

(table continues)

Name of school/status	Mailing address	Grades
Veinerville Christian Academy Funded and Accredited	1933 Dunmore Road S.E. Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 1Z9	1-8
Vermilion Peace School Registered	Box 211 Fort Vermilion, Alberta T0H 1N0	1-9
Victory Christian School Funded and Accredited	11520 Ellerslie Road SW Edmonton, Alberta T6W 1A2	ECS-12
West Edmonton Christian Funded and Accredited	14345 McQueen Road Edmonton, Alberta T5N 3L5	ECS-9
West Island College Funded and Accredited	7410 Blackfoot Trail SE Calgary, Alberta T2H 1M5	7-12
Wilson Prairie Mennonite School Registered	Box 988 La Crete, Alberta T0H 2H0	1-9
Woodlands Adventist School Funded and Accredited	Box 16, Site 2, R.R. 3 Ponoka, Alberta T4J 1R3	1-9
Word of Life School Society Funded and Accredited	R.R. 4, Site 4, Box 30 Red Deer, Alberta T4N 5E4	ECS-12
Yellowhead Christian Funded and Accredited	4711 - 9 Avenue Edson, Alberta T7E 1E2	ECS-12

Source: Alberta Education (1997).

Appendix B

Correspondence

Correspondence

11215 - 41 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T6J 0T6

March 21, 1996

Re: Consent to Participate in the
Independent School Principals Study

Dear _____:

Following our recent discussion during which you agreed to participate in the study of independent school principals, I am requesting that you acknowledge your consent by signing this letter. I have enclosed two copies so that you can keep one for your records.

As a participant in this study, you are asked to allow me to interview you on two separate occasions in March and April, at a time and location which are mutually convenient. The interviews should take approximately 1 hour. At that time I would appreciate receiving copies of any relevant documents.

As discussed, you may at any time withdraw your consent to participate in the study. You are also granted veto rights over the transcripts of the interviews and conversations in which you are involved.

Following the study, you will be provided with a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. I plan to alter names of individuals and their schools to protect anonymity. The research proposal has been approved by an ethics committee of the Department of Educational Policy Studies of the University of Alberta. My supervisor is Dr. E. A. Holdaway (phone 492-3690).

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I appreciate your generosity in sharing your time and insights. I hope that you find the process to be enjoyable and rewarding.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce V. Decoux

I, _____, acknowledge that I consent to participate in the study described above.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

11215 - 41 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T6J 0T6

April 4, 1997

Dear _____:

Last spring you participated in an interview(s) regarding my study of leadership in independent schools in Alberta. Since that time the transcripts have been forwarded for your perusal and comments. In subsequent phone conversations you indicated no problem with my reproducing some of your comments (occasionally paraphrased or condensed) as anonymous quotations in the study. Would you please indicate your confirmation of the above by signing and returning the enclosed form by mail or fax.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce V. Decoux

BVD/lp
Encl.

Date: _____

Dear Mr. Decoux:

This is to confirm that you have my permission to paraphrase, condense, and use (anonymously) comments from our interview transcript.

_____
Signature

Please mail to Mr. Bruce V. Decoux
11215 - 41 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T6J 0T6

Or fax to (403) 439-0310

Appendix C

Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

The major purpose of the study is to examine the perceptions of successful independent school principals relative to the major factors which are perceived to affect success in their leadership role.

External Factors

1. How did you first come to be involved in independent schools?
2. What led you to decide to pursue an administrative position in an independent school?
3. How did you come to be principal of your school?
4. Would you briefly review the history of your school?
5. Please describe your relationships with the following organizations and groups:
   a. Alberta Education
   b. Alberta Independent Schools and Colleges Association
   c. the chair of your board
   d. the financial officer (secretary-treasurer)
   e. your teachers
   f. the parents of your students
   g. colleagues or acquaintances in the public, separate, or other school systems
   h. colleagues in other independent schools
   i. religious personnel
   j. other independent school associations
6. Do the School Act and government policy and regulations affect your administration and leadership of your school relative to achieving its mission?

7. What are your opinions about the status of independent schools in Alberta?

Internal Factors

8. What effects do the governance, organization, and administrative structure of the board and school have on your success in effectively administering your school?
9. Does the provincial curriculum present problems for you as principal?
10. What role do the parents play in the life of your school?
11. What is your relationship with your students?
12. What is your relationship with your teachers?
13. Several experts have spoken about *symbolic traditions* of independent schools. This term usually refers to symbolic rituals, symbols, ceremonies, and actions such as graduations, student assemblies, school mascots, stories, and legends. Can you describe the symbolic traditions of your school and their influences relative to your leadership?
14. *School culture* has been referred to by writers as school climate, atmosphere, personality, feel, tone, and character. It encompasses such things as relationships among students, teachers, support staff, and parents, and is often described as "the way things are done around here." How would you define your school's culture?
15. What are your perceptions of the essential elements of a desirable school culture?

Criteria for Success

16. What is your personal educational philosophy?
17. How would you describe your leadership style?

18. What aspects of your role provide you the most satisfaction?
19. What are the most positive aspects of your role?
20. What are the most negative aspects of your role?
21. How do you influence your school's culture, and how does it influence your leadership style?
22. What are the major influences on your effectiveness as a principal?
23. What do you view as your major accomplishments?
24. Do you have comments on any other matters not covered in the preceding questions?